

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 1 -

WOMAN: Good evening, and Welcome. I'm Susan [inaudible], and I'm also sad to— [DVD goes black, resumes]

WOMAN: —find out about the early development of video and starting, actually, before 1969 that Ira will talk about today, when it wasn't used in the sense that it developed into later; that it was very much around and active before the funding agencies came into existence. And I had a lot of trouble finding past information from the history. So I thought possibly the best way to get this information would be to have some of the people that were very much active at that time. So I'd like to introduce the panel today. John Giancola, who's sitting right here [inaudible], who is presently associate professor of communications at the University of Tampa, Florida. He's the former director of the Media Program at the New York State Council on the Arts; and he was affiliated early on with the Alternative Media Center in New York City. Margo Lewitan is artistic director of Women's Interarts Center, and she was a founding board member of Media Alliance, which she'll be talking about later. Ira Schneider, down next to Nathan, is currently president of Raindance Foundation in New York City; co-director of Night Light TV, on Manhattan Cable. He's the co-publisher of the journal *Radical Software*, that was one of the earliest, I think, publications for media and information; and editor of the book *Video Art*, with Beryl Korot. Ira has also brought some tapes from early NYSCA meetings that will be playing in the background. Yes.

IRA SCHNEIDER: Playing in the background? [inaudible voices over each other; laughter]

MARGO LEWITAN: That's tough competition. [laughter; inaudible voices] That's like putting a kid behind him.

WOMAN: Moderator for the symposium is Nathan Lyons, who is the director of the Visual Studies Workshop. Thank you. Nathan?

NATHAN LYONS: Thank you, Lisa[?].

WOMAN: You're welcome.

LYONS: We have an impossible task, I think, this afternoon and this morning. So I'd just like to set up some parameters for the panel. And I'd like to begin with some reflection on the notion of memory and history. Of course if you were there, it was memory; and if you weren't, it's history. [laughter] And there's the understanding that both processes are somewhat flawed, ok? And if we can proceed in the spirit of that. And then what I'd like to encourage the panelists to do is to begin possibly in that period of inception, and then try to trace major intersections with the development of video in New York State that probably follow the routes of public and private funding, other ecological factors that we've all intersected in periods of time. One of the distinct patterns is that often, there is a life history to all of this that's varied and complex. And I think the assembly of this group today should bring a variety of perspectives. And I'll try to keep us on track, but you should already have the sense that with this combination of people, that may be the hardest thing that I have to do this afternoon.

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- 2 -

LYONS (Cont.): So Ira is going to really start and try to fill in something about that earlier period of development. I think John, Margo, and myself, as well as Ira have intersected the process variously, and we'll try to give you some sense, I think after Ira sets the stage, of what we were all doing and why, in that really early period of time. The plot thickens with issues of public funding, and I think the plot thickens with the realization that there are many organizations that began with the inception of an interest in video that are no longer in existence. So my hope is that we can cover this territory not in too dry a fashion. If not, John would probably love a brouhaha somewhere in the middle, because he has the propensity for naps at midday. And we'll kind of [inaudible voice] work our way through. Alright, Ira, you want to...?

JOHN GIANCOLA: Mid-afternoon, ok, Nathan? Mid-afternoon. Mid-day? [inaudible voices; laughter] Mid-day is a little decadent.

IRA SCHNEIDER: I'd like to provide context for this, and so I'm going to just briefly summarize a lecture I give to my introductory video art students. I call it Video Art From the Beginning of the Universe to the Present. And it starts back something like this. It's going to be a summary; I'll do it as quickly as I can.

Scientists say that about eighteen-billion years ago, there was a giant explosion of the universe as we know it. All the matter, all the energy has come from the expansion, or in the expansion of that original explosion. Matter, in the form of hydrogen clouds, gradually forming into stars

SCHNEIDER (Cont.): in some places, still remaining clouds of hydrogen in other places. Our sun forming around fourteen- to ten-billion years ago. And then as part of the surrounding clouds of matter, and later, of stars exhausting their hydrogen supply, exhausting helium, supernova exploding, et cetera, et cetera. Earth forming around four-billion years ago. And in the course of four-billion years, the evolution of living matter, living organisms, and those living organisms having finer and finer sensory processes to discern, to perceive what's in the environment for survival purposes. Two important sensory mechanism. One, sense of sight, which taps into a small sector of the electromagnetic spectrum; and a sense of sound, which is dependent on an atmosphere and vibrations in an atmosphere. Then an organism like man/woman developing, to a point where it, in cave paintings, embellishes its life, its home area, either to divine or to provide some mystical connection with its livelihood, based on hunting and gathering; pictures in cave paintings of deer and of antelope and buffalo, et cetera, and of humans, as well. Then the history of painting, one of representation, veritical[?] representation, trying to represent or to development portraiture, to make a copy of real life, to preserve real life. That developing to a point, until around 1839, the discovery of photography. And photography then, with it's more true, let's say, representation of reality, freeing up painting to become more abstract. Around 1890s or so, the notion of repeated images, sequential images and motion picture, the illusion of motion that occurs after something flashes in the eye at about sixteen frames per second. By 1912, sound being married to film in Edison's first talkies. 1927, first commercial sound and picture film, *The Jazz Singer*. One year later, the development of the television tube, the cathode ray tube. Philo T. Farnsworth; MacDonald[sp?], in Scotland. And the delay in marketing of television because of the

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Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 3 -

SCHNEIDER (Cont.): intervention of the Second World War and the technologies going more towards radar than towards a commercial method of providing entertainment. Radio had already been in place, and some notions of television were that it was a radio with a screen. At first, there was no storage medium for television, and live television would have to be recorded by a film camera facing a monitor. Kinescope. 1950s, Ampex coming out with the video tape recorder. The first model sold for about \$250-, \$300,000; television cameras, about \$35-, \$40,000 apiece. It necessarily meant that in this country, television was in the hands of corporate interests, the networks, TV stations. And they controlled the access to it. That meant that artists very rarely, if ever, had an opportunity to use this new medium for whatever purpose artistic.

It wasn't until the middle sixties that Sony developed a helical scan portable videotape recorder, which then opened it up for artists to access, at a cost of \$1500, as opposed to the, like, \$300,000 that would've been necessary for a quadraplex two-inch Ampex recorder and the big cameras that were on dollies. Portapak then allowed artists to use video in many different ways. I recognize three basic approaches that seem to have continued into today. One is the artists and engineers, technicians, who were interested in the image, mainly, and manipulating the image, processing the image, working with abstract imagery on the screen, sometimes mixing it with music; artists, then, who pointed the camera at themselves and used video in a performance setting, whether as just the documentation of performance or whether, like Joan Jonas, incorporating it into, like, a dialog, where Joan Jonas will be acting as well as interacting with her image, pre-taped image, on a screen, Bill Wegman doing it more as either SCHNEIDER (Cont.): documentation or the performance itself; and then another group of artists who point a camera out towards the world and abstract in many different ways, whether narrative or not narrative, whether strictly documentary or a mix of all the others, pointing out towards the world and presenting that.

So that brings us, then, to a time before the funding agencies, where video was being used by artists in New York State and elsewhere in the country—people like Bill Wegman, as I say, and Joan Jonas, myself, Frank Gillette. Nam June Paik, perhaps the earliest, got Portapak, he claims, about '65, before they were actually marketed, and videotaped the pope's arrival in New York. I don't know exactly when that was. Actually, Nam June got into video or television art through his connection with Fluxus in Germany. And it was along the Rhine River where a number of artists—Wolf Vostell, Ulrike Rosenbach[?], even Aldo Tambellini was there—started working with video, video art. Television as an art form. Generally against commercial television and for some new extended form.

Back to New York, where people like Paul Ryan and Marsh[?], Frank Gillette, and a number of others received money from Marshall McLuhan, up at Fordham, got ahold of Portapaks and started to develop what we have since started to call media ecology, ecological uses of the medium, as opposed to the way broadcast television is marketing products. By the time of the formation of the funding sources, there were at least four major groups in the New York City area. One of them the Video Freaks, which was a commune. Ah. [applause; laughter] Ok. The rest of our panel has luckily arrived. And they were there then, and they're here now. [laughter]

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Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 4 -

SCHNEIDER (Cont.): The Video Freaks, a commune that was interested mainly in production; Raindance, which was interested in, as I say, media ecology and passing this information technology on to others; People's Video Theater, which was into, like, the communal/community/social aspect of the city; and Global Village, which was a video theater, started out to be an information center, and then became more a video theater with light show. There were places like Portable Channel. When did Portable Channel form?

MAN: 1973.

SCHNEIDER: Ah, it's later than I expected.

MAN: [inaudible] '73.

SCHNEIDER: Were there early...

MAN: '72.

SCHNEIDER: Were there early video people working up in this area? I know there were some in Buffalo, because of Gerry O'Grady's project at the school.

MAN: I'm not really certain, Ira...

SCHNEIDER: Ok.

MAN: ...in any formal way. There may have been at the university or at some of the colleges, in terms of those that [inaudible]...

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. There was certainly some work being done up around the Cornell area. And when did you start in Binghamton?

MAN: I started around '69 in Binghamton.

SCHNEIDER: That's right. One of the early ones. Then we heard that funding was available from the New York State Council on the Arts. And now I'll pass it on to [inaudible; laughter]

WOMAN: And the rest is history.

SCHNEIDER: Well, actually, I'll add this, that about '68, I attended a meeting with Ken Dewey. And I remember that Elaine Summers was there and Jackie Cassen. I don't remember the other people who were there. But that's the first mention I heard that the New York State Council on the Arts was thinking of making funding available for video, this new medium. I was still a filmmaker at the time, and I was about to switch into video because the film that I had just completed had cost me \$5,000, took me six months to make, and it was a five-minute film that had no promise of any financial return to it. [laughter] So I thought that I could

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- 5 -

SCHNEIDER (Cont.): produce much cheaper and much faster with video. And that's where the trouble began. [laughter]

LYONS: Well, logically, since Ralph and Sherry were the latest to arrive... [laughter]

WOMAN: I told you this was going to be trouble. [laughter]

LYONS: What we're really trying to accomplish, for starters, is to start to characterize what those early interests were about, how the organizations formed, who you were serving, and the nature of the community that grew out of that activity. So if you pick it up there, then we can go to Margo; and then John can certainly give us some sense of the [inaudible]

RALPH HOCKING: [inaudible; laughter; inaudible voices over each other]

LYONS: And then I'll try to...

LEWITAN: We have a child in our midst. [laughter]

LYONS: I'll try to balance it off, because we started in '69, as well. But in terms of a very different model.

HOCKING: [inaudible]

LYONS: We started doing video in about '70, '71. But I'll explain that. [laughter]

HOCKING: Well, you want me to talk to you about it now.

LYONS: No, that's this afternoon, we get to mix it up a little.

HOCKING: Alright. I started on the campus of SUNY Binghamton. I was hired with the intention of trying to do something with the arts and technology. Had been fired from a teaching position, had not been given tenure at one of them[?]. And fortunately, the guy who ran this [inaudible] picked me up just to see what I would do. So I was sitting on this campus—I had some rooms—and just did whatever I wanted to do. Which was kind of interesting. I wasn't teaching anything. And that was about 1968, I came over there. I think it was around '68, earlier that year—or maybe even '67, I can't remember—I ran into Nam June Paik—or “Peck,” depending on how you want to pronounce it—in a gallery in New York, on 57<sup>th</sup> Street, and couldn't figure out what the hell he was doing.

WOMAN: In New York.

HOCKING: Hm?

WOMAN: A New York gallery.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

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Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 6 -

HOCKING: A video gallery, right. And just watching him go around and, you know, do magnets and, "Hey, get a magnet, try this." And I thought: What the hell's this all about? You know? And I was fascinated with that, and it was pretty amazing stuff. And I had no idea why he was doing it. My background is in the arts in visual arts, pottery and sculpture and stuff like that. And I've always been interested in mechanical things and how things work. So when I went to this campus, I still had a contact with Nam June. Nam June and I, for some reason, get along together. And I would sort of talk to him occasionally. And we had no idea what we were going to do or what—And he was at Stony Brook at the time, I think. He was teaching out there, or he was on a grant, doing something at Stony Brook. And my first thing on the campus was to fool around with photography, because I was also interested in that.

And then this Portapak thing got invented. And this is one of the first ones, what's left... [laughter] And we said, "Yeah, well, look what you can do with that thing." [laughs] I mean, you could actually make television. And I'd always thought that television was terrible, you know? There wasn't anything to watch. And then I would go to schools. They were using television in the classroom, and they would have these monitors up, and people sitting in their room looking at monitors—or sleeping, or doing whatever they did—these people who were sort of being very drying presented with... I mean, it was just awful! It was boring as hell. And pretty soon I was in this one place—I think it was in Edinboro, Pennsylvania. I was watching a group of kids watch television. I mean college age. And they were yelling at the television set. They were just, "Oh, you dumb son of a bitch!" You know? [laughter] "What do you mean?" And they were doing something. I mean, they were actually interacting with the television.

HOCKING (Cont.): And I kept thinking, you know: Wow, maybe you can do something with that, you know? Maybe there's some hope for this stuff. And then when these little machines came out, I convinced the university to buy a few of them for me and store them on campus. I would just loan them to people. Say, "Here. Go do something." And they would go out and they—I said, "The only thing you have to do is bring the machine back. I don't care if I see what you do. I don't care about any of it. Just go do something." So the students would take these things out, and faculty members, and they brought them back. Some very interesting things started to occur, in terms of kids going back to where they came from around New York—Bedford-Stuyvesant, places like this. Developed a whole program on one of the[?] tapes that was developed, made by a kid there.

We were then—or Nam June kept telling me that there was this New York State Council on the Arts place where they give you money. I said, "You're out of your mind, man. Nobody ever gives me any money. [laughter] It's stupid." He says, "No, call Russ Conner, call Russ Conner." I said, "Ok." I called Russ Conner, he said, "I'll meet you at this apple and cheese bar on 57<sup>th</sup> Street on Tuesday." Jesus, that means I've got to go to New York. [they laugh] So I went down there. I walked in, and he's sitting there, you know, waiting for me to show up. And we started talking about this. And he said, "Yeah, you can get some money." I mean, it was amazing. And the first year I applied, I got \$50,000. And I had no organization. I had nothing. And they gave the money through the local PBS station, who really resented it. But they got maybe ten- or twelve-thousand as, you know, something; but they had to give me the fifty-thousand. So the guy just sort of wrote the check out and gave it to me. And I could've gone

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John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 7 -

HOCKING (Cont.): south, I could've done anything. It was interesting. But that was the way I finally worked into the situation where I had some funding.

Moved off the campus, started a community structure, and called it the Experimental Television Center—which it truly was, as far as I was concerned. Tried to deal with the components of the university, education, the arts, and the community. And we kept doing the same thing, handing things out. It evolved into some other things. I better stop and let somebody else go. How far do you want me to— You want me to bring it up to date or...? [laughs]

LYONS: No, no, [inaudible]

HOCKING: My last birthday? What do you want to do? [laughter]

LYONS: No. No, I think it's really...

HOCKING: Was that enough?

LYONS: ...the early period.

HOCKING: Ok. That's about as early as it— That's how we developed and formed.

LYONS: Because I think a few of us began before the Council was responsive to funding. And then I think there are different histories represented.

HOCKING: Yeah, well, I didn't get my first grant until, I think, in '71. So I was there from '68 to '71 with just whatever I could get from the university, which wasn't a whole lot. But we were— We moved into the community, at the Council's support [inaudible].

LYONS: Let's move to Margo and see where we get.

LEWITAN: Well, I don't know how many of you are familiar with the Women's Interarts Center, but the Women's Interarts Center is an artist based organization. It began in— Well, we're beginning this fall, the first celebration of our three-year twentieth anniversary celebration, because it all depends on what you count from, you know? [laughs] If you count from the first meetings, it began in '69, and if you count from the first lease, it began in '71. So somewhere in between is the truth of the energy or something. So we're starting now. But it was an organization that was birthed in the middle of the Women's Movement, and also in the middle of a time where, if you considered yourself to be a working artist, somebody working in the arts, you were concentrating, generally, on one form. And I think that's very difficult for people that are working in the arts now to really realize, because the interaction of artforms is prevalent now throughout the practice and study of art. But in the late sixties, that was not really so true. And if somebody had been working, and in their own mind, successfully, as a painter, or had achieved some recognition as a painter, they were not likely to be

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

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John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 8 -

LEWITAN (Cont.): experimenting in photography. Or even a better example, maybe, would be painting and sculpture as opposed to ceramics. I mean, there was a difference between craft and high artforms that was quite pronounced.

And so one of the things that we were trying to do at the Center was to prevent our own sense of isolation, and interact with each other, both in terms of the creation of work and simply in the exchange of ideas. And we thought it would be a wonderful thing if we had a place where we could all go and do that. So the effort was to establish a multi-arts organization that would bring to the attention of the public primarily the work of women artists, but to give all artists an opportunity to work contiguously with each other and interact with each other. And we began with multi- or interactive processes—a dancer, a visual artist, and a musician. I mean, I think our first Interart project was a dancer dancing to music being played by a flutist, while a visual artist projected hand painted glass slides, to become the costume of the dancer. And it was really—it was a very exciting time. I'm losing a little in the translation. [laughter] But it was fun. And the first of the media arts that we experimented with was film.

And then in 1971, when we finally signed our first lease, our visual arts coordinator looked into the possibility of getting a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to buy a Portapak. So our first experimentation was a kind of collective workshop in examining the possibilities of what this Portapak could do. And then from there, we had somebody who knew a little bit more than other people start workshops on the basics. And then you had a chance to take the Portapak and go out and do a project. And I would say that from 1971—which as I

LEWITAN (Cont.): guess, '70, '71 is when I think we had our—'71, '72 is when we had the Portapak there for the first time—all the way through the seventies, the focus of the organization was in making the medium accessible to individuals who wanted to experiment with it, and also to do group projects. So we had essentially two[?] kinds of things happening—individual artists using the medium in whatever way they saw fit, groups coming together to create documentary, and groups coming together to create installation pieces. And we had three very interesting installation pieces at the Center in this period of time. One was called *What's On Tonight?*. And it was a group of individual artists that created video environments. The other was called *Video Toys*, and that was the idea of Wendy Clarke, and everybody worked towards the realization of that idea. And then we had an erotic art show, with individual artists having certain segments to create erotic environments. And video was used in three of those ten environments, I think. Our space was very conducive to this kind of installation effort, because we had five-thousand square feet of essentially raw space that you could do anything you wanted with, and create walls and stuff like that. And then in the early eighties, we had the Backseat show that Bob brought up here, with video and cars. Is that what you had in mind, in terms of...

LYONS: You know, just to get a feeling of...

LEWITAN: The Council entered our lives early, but they did not precede us. [laughs]

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Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 9 -

LYONS: John, in one sense, represents another model of activity. So I'd like to move to John, and then we'll...

MAN: I would like a moment after John, because I've remembered some other groups that...

MAN: I just want to do the seventies, too, so...

LYONS: Take it away, John.

GIANCOLA: I was involved in parallel kinds of activities at this time that were not Council related, that had to do with video in the community. I wrote my first and last script for ABC Network in 1968. It was a documentary on how to save the environment, that was funded by Xerox. And when I saw the degree to which the script I had written was edited, I left. It was very painfully obvious that there was going to be—that the networks were going to be a very difficult medium for social change, with so much control being—It was obvious to everyone but me. I mean, I tried to work for them. And the National Council of Churches, I went to work in their film and television department for two years, while I was knocking around looking for what to do next. I discovered the Challenge for Change program out of Canada, and a man named George Stoney, who took me under his wing. And I joined the teaching staff of the Alternate Media Center of NYU, which had a video access center attached to it, by which community people could make programming for Manhattan Cable Television. I didn't do a lot GIANCOLA (Cont.): of work for Alternate Media Center, I just was called in every time they had their twenty-four cable interns from around the United States in New York, which was twice a year.

The NEA had given NYU money to put twenty-four Challenge for Change trained interns in cable companies across the US, to start the public access television movement. Actually, it's interesting that the NEA gave the \$100,000 just to get that going. And NYU—And the cable companies matched the \$100,000 to get these people. So it was \$100,000/\$100,000 match. And I became deeply involved for about seven years in public access television. My strategy was to work with a large, well endowed institution to try and get it to support the training of its constituent communities. So my first project was twelve United Methodist churches in Manhattan. And the Methodist Church Information Office gave me the money to Portapak train people in twelve churches to make cable programming. And the ecology of those churches, the demographics ranged from Harlem to Chinatown to Korean, across all ethnicities. So it was an interesting experiment. And then word of mouth, the churches started passing me to each other. And I signed a contract with the Trinity Church Foundation on Wall Street to train 125 parishioners in access, in video shooting and editing. Remember the old editing Ira talked about last night?

SCHNEIDER: Brute force.

GIANCOLA: Brute force. Well, by 1972, '73—by '74, we had vertical interval. So though we were still using the China markers and, you know, rewinding the videotape five seconds by

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Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

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Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 10 -

hand, and putting an X on the tape— And when you'd see the X go by, you'd hit the record button. [laughter; inaudible voices] So teaching 125 lay people— In other words, the experiment was that nobody should have a predisposition to television for this movement to work; it should just be the ones who want to make television. And Trinity put almost \$100,000 into that project, in 1973 dollars or '4 dollars; that was fairly impressive. I still didn't know about the Council. So I blindly went on [laughter] on my own, raising foundation money. And I worked for the Riverside Church for two or three years. They won the best cable show of the year award the first year that I trained. I was very proud of that. And they were on Upper Manhattan Cable. My strategy was that if large institutions took advantage of access television, it would be much harder to reverse the legislation if so-called powerful institutions felt it was important to their constituency. And that was my agreed upon strategy with the Alternate Media Center. And I was an agent of the Alternate Media Center on the streets. And it was all very movement oriented. And I think personally, I was holding onto movements from the sixties, just working in a movement that was viable for the seventies, but still had a movement quality. I got to do several independent projects that I enjoyed thoroughly. I got to contribute toward the development of a public access movement in Barbados for three winters in a row. [laughter]

SCHNEIDER: Hard work, "mon."

GIANCOLA: It was really hard to get me there in July, but I really responded in January. I live in Florida now; that should tell you something. And I got to do a conflict resolution experiment in the Middle East, between Arabs and Jews, with video, that was paid for by the Episcopal Church of New York. That produced twenty-four half hours of real time video that I still have in suitcases, you know, wondering how to transfer it before it's too late.

And then I mainstreamed, and in the late seventies, went to work for the Council, which is where I come into this picture. But I think it's important I come from the community video-as-a-social-revolution movement, right? And I'm a relative latecomer to video as an artform. I had a great deal to learn in a very short amount of time, in order to run that program at the Council. But I had what you might call a predisposition to learning the artform. I had been to Raindance, I had been to The Kitchen, I had been to the Howard Wise exhibition—I knew of the artform. I was a lay person who liked the artform when the Council hired me.

SCHNEIDER: Ok. I'd just like to pick up and add a few other...

LYONS: [inaudible] early involvement with Raindance, as well.

SCHNEIDER: Ok, fine. I just wanted to mention, though, that Shirley Clarke was working at the Chelsea, and she had her Video Tepee going, in which a number of people would come in and they would do experiments of many different kinds; and that The Kitchen was born through the efforts of the Visulkas; and the Broadway Central was somehow connected with

SCHNEIDER (Cont.): Papp's theater at the time, and continued in that space until the building collapsed. [inaudible voices] Then it moved to Wooster Street, Wooster and Broome. And you

## EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 11 -

mentioned the Alternate Media Center; that was definitely there at that time. I think we can all agree that we recognize that broadcast television was not providing the information or even the entertainment that we really liked. They were not paying attention to either movement in a political sense or, let's say, alternate lifestyles. And one of the first things that we were interested in doing at Raindance was providing alternate information. I had already videotaped at the Woodstock festival and at Altamont. And one of the first projects that I did when I got to Raindance was to organize the videotaping of a Buckminster Fuller interview. I had already videotaped Abbie Hoffman and the other members of the Chicago Seven or Eight. And these things were not given much play on broadcast television. The next thing was, how do we develop exhibition places? The Kitchen was one of those; Global Village, which I helped start, was another one. And then Raindance and the other groups that I mentioned, Video Freaks, and People's Video Theater joined together to have weekly showings and provide information that we just could not find on broadcast television.

LEWITAN: Ira, when did the TV Lab start at Channel 13?

SCHNEIDER: I imagine it was '71 or so. The only video art broadcast station that I knew of before them was The Medium is the Medium. And WGBH up in Boston was, like, the real pioneer of video art, or artists' use of video. There was a little bit down at KQED in San Francisco, but perhaps one or two shows. It was really 'GBH, and then 'NET that helped bring SCHNEIDER (Cont.): artists into the television studio. But there was also a certain bias that they had. It was not political in any sense of the word. It was, if anything, dance and imagery behind the dance that was more the focus than any other approach to the medium. I'm willing to pass the ball on.

LYONS: Alright. Well, I'm supposed to try to characterize how we intersected. The workshop was founded in 1969. And actually, one of our first major projects that provided the funding base for a first stage involvement in media, we had this— We had a loft on Elton Street, of about 3,000 square feet, down the block. And I had just left a major photographic institution and relished the notion of becoming a reverse careerist. [laughter] And the shape—it didn't dawn on me till everybody started to talk, but the model of the workshop was implicit in the first major funding we received, which was from the Rochester Northeast Area Development Association, to design a communications package for one of the inner city neighborhoods that was going through a dramatic transition. And the model we proposed was working with high school students who lived in that area, introducing them to media possibilities to characterize their own personal experiences of living in that community. And we did everything from printed material, introduced them to audiotape in relation to oral history, photography, film, slide/tape presentations, and also engaged in print media, which were essentially the avenues that we were pursuing at that early stage. When I asked people in that period to join the board, two people that I asked to join the board were Stan VanDerBeek and Robert Frank, each because they tended to represent some investigation of existing media in an alternative sense. Probably our main thrust was in response, in film, to the use of Super-8 millimeter as a tool.

LYONS (Cont.): Frank was doing a lot of work in Super-8, and actually did a month long residency with some of the graduate students, in generating a film. VanDerBeek came up and I

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 12 -

think drove the museum and science center absolutely crazy for an equal period of time by doing one of his eight-hour dream performances that we all went to at around eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and endured an imagistic bombardment and sound bombardment in the planetarium, with the encouragement of falling asleep and waking up to coffee and orange juice in the lobby, to immediately recount the dreams that we all had out of this experience. [laughter] And he had a dream hotline that he [inaudible; laughter] people remembered. We were a merger I think, of another thing, that the co[?] was our relationship to a university, but not being a part of the university. I think that's where we were probably very different than a number of activities that were happening within the university itself. Our major funding that helped to articulate our media concerns—and we using the term media prior to video—was through the Noble Foundation that give us \$25,000 a year for three years. And that was the main influx of funding that helped begin to articulate our physical facility.

As I've indicated, I think most of the thinking was around film. And we had a number of students who were working in film. There's one student whose name was Larry Gale[sp?], who one day showed up with a Portapak. I don't honestly know where he got it from. But that seemed to set up a kind of suggestion in our collective midst that we better start to move in this direction and incorporate this new technology into our thinking. An artist in New York City, John Randolph Carter, had been working in video. He was a printmaker. And you get a combination of kind of interests here that is often hard to figure out. But John came up and did LYONS (Cont.): a residency program with us and helped us to move, primarily in terms of a studio facility. We weren't into Portapaks until later. And what hasn't been characterized, but is implicit in what everybody has been saying, is that informal networks began to spring up. People dropped by. Information was exchanged. One day a surly lot from Cherry Hill, New York—Was it Cherry Hill? The Freaks, where were they based?

SCHNEIDER: Eventually, Lanesville, but they were on Prince Street at first. [inaudible voice] Livingston Street, then Prince...

LYONS: Yeah, they were just moving up to take over Lanesville and set up their first community television. Showed up to look us over. Simultaneously, of course, we were looking over then. We cut a deal that if they came back, we would help them publish one of their first publications on community access video, as a trade for instruction within the group. And the culmination of that was a major exhibition on the part of the Freaks at the workshop. And we were basically off and rolling. I think most of that precedes any relationship with the existence of the State Council on the Arts.

Now, the second phase of this really is the question of—or it might be how we were keeping it together, which was, you know, in the formation of our organization and what that first impact of certainly, State Council funding represented in relation to who we thought we were, where we thought we were going, and how the medium was collectively defined by the existence of a funding agency. Is that a fair shake?

GIANCOLA: That's good.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 13 -

LYONS: Ok. Go.

SCHNEIDER: If I may, I'd like to bring Raindance into this now as the— Raindance was the group that wrote the first proposal funded by the New York State Council on the Arts, the first grant for video in the state. And the dream we had, which did not become reality, was to develop what we thought of as a center for decentralized television. We were aware of all of these different groups and individuals throughout the state. We had already started to— We were publishing *Radical Software*. We had some private seed money, and heard of the availability of funding from the State Council. And we devised this plan whereby we would develop not only a system for— a re-granting system, money flowing through us in a balanced way, re-granted to various groups and individuals throughout the state, to produce works through the gamut of artists' work with video, and including documentary and some social concerns. And also we thought it very important to help develop exhibition spaces and then a distribution system, without which we thought that, well, all the stuff will get produced and it'll wind up on shelves somewhere. Because we knew that broadcast television would not show this work, partly because their engineers said that it was not technically of the quality for broadcast television; and too, because of their bias towards more commercial entertainments and a mass market approach to their markets. We were granted, I believe, \$260,000. And then there was, let's say, a large flap, where other people working in video started to call in to the State Council and say, "You can't give all the money to those guys, because we're working in SCHNEIDER (Cont.): it and we want some funds, too." And then as meetings were organized to air this, staff members of the New York State Council on the Arts from the museum section and from— Is it called Special Programs or...?

GIANCOLA[?]: Special Art Services.

SCHNEIDER: Special Art Services. Came into the meetings and said, "Well, we want some of this money, 'cause we wanna do video." And I have actually brought some tapes with me of those early meetings, which at some point in time, we will show today so that you can see the process that went down about what to do with this money that we thought at Raindance we had devised a plan for that was rational and fair, and that would be a problem solving type thing.

GIANCOLA[?]: And be centralized.

SCHNEIDER: And be centralized.

GIANCOLA[?]: Not letting the Council grab the money, but granting it.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. It would be granted within the field, with a peer panel group. But it would be in this balance type notion of production, exhibition, and distribution; and public relations, publicity, with print sources as a backup. *Radical Software* and books. I helped to get a publisher for the Video Freaks *Spaghetti City Video Manual*, which was a manual for the SCHNEIDER (Cont.): Portapak. We had already published *Guerrilla Television*, and were continuing with *Radical Software*.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 14 -

GIANCOLA: And what was the year?

SCHNEIDER: Well, we're talking between '69 and '71.

GIANCOLA: So it's 1970 dollars, \$260,000.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. Ultimately, what went down was as far as I know, four groups in New York City got \$35,000 apiece. That's Raindance, Video Freaks, People's Video Theater, and Global Village. The museum staff got, oh, perhaps \$50- or \$60,000 of that original \$260,000 for their uses of video, and Special Services also got about \$50,000. The remaining \$20,000 went to a few other individuals and groups throughout the state.

MAN: By museum staff, you mean museum staff of the Council.

SCHNEIDER: Of the New York State Council on the Arts.

MAN: For distribution, for exhibition.

SCHNEIDER: For production, distribution, and exhibition, within museum contexts.

MAN: Not related to the [inaudible]

LEWITAN: I think we should see those tapes earlier rather than later, [inaudible voice] don't you?

GIANCOLA: No, not—I think Ira's saying that other programs got some of that money. [inaudible] Council.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. Yeah, and Special Services were based—really, you're basically talking about black communities and Hispanic communities and their uses for video. But what they were looking to do was to get it on broadcast television, so that their \$60,000 or so went for, like, one production.

GIANCOLA: Right. There are other areas of the Council that do video. For example, architecture. And this is also the NEA. They have video guidelines for architectural projects. So he's referring to the video used by another [inaudible].

LYONS: Well, Ralph, you characterized your first intersection with receipt of Council funding. What were the subsequent follow-ups like in your life?

HOCKING: Well, I'm just listening to all this and kind of trying to reconnect some of these lost memories. [laughter]

SCHNEIDER: Get the synapses back. That's what I'm doing.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 15 -

[inaudible voice; laughter]

HOCKING: I remember this whole brouhaha that Ira's describing, the big bucks thing. I didn't know what that all meant. I had no idea what was going on. It didn't seem right to me, but I mean, nothing seems right to me anyway [inaudible; laughter] But my sense of it was never that I was a part of a movement. I never felt that I was part of an organized movement. I never felt that... But I didn't trust these guys in New York. I mean, Chamber[?] No, I wouldn't go near these guys. Scared the hell out of me.

MAN: I know what you mean. [they laugh]

HOCKING: I didn't have the same kind of spirit of revolution, of involvement with politics, of sociological change. I was only interested in what might happen. I didn't have any idea of what *would* happen, and I had no plan. And I still don't. I've got a little more of a plan, but I don't have as much as I should have, probably. [laughter] So my approach to this was a little bit different, I think, than most of the people I was running into. I had no sense of trying to put together a collective. I didn't want a collective. I didn't want an organization that way. I wanted maybe a loose knit, *very* loosely knit group of individuals who never came together unless it was accidental. And I still do this. I'm still very much in favor of trying to development individual thinking and individual understanding in the arts. And I think it

HOCKING (Cont.): probably just comes from the fact that my training was as an individual visual artist. I don't get it when two people get together to make art. Doesn't make any sense to me. So all of the kind of development that you went through... And as I said, we had these sort of three areas we were working with: the kind of formal school systems, including [inaudible] school systems and the school systems and the environs and the university; and then the community in general; and then finally, the arts, the visual arts. And the visual arts was sort of where we evolved to. That's what we're doing now, pretty much, only working with the visual arts. But out of that, we helped a lot of people locally understand how they might go after some of this Council money, too. And some of them did, I think, eventually try to go after some of it. The schools certainly started to get their own equipment. They saw the worth of the whole thing. And my passion at that point—and still is, to a certain extent—was to try to develop machines. And I mean, we screwed everything up. We would buy a piece of equipment, immediately take it apart, nulling—voiding all guarantees...

SHERRY MILLER HOCKING: This camera is a good example of it.

HOCKING: ...to start putting— Yeah, this [inaudible]

MILLER HOCKING: This is typical of what our equipment looked like.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 16 -

HOCKING: This has got all kinds of doodads [inaudible]. And that's what we were doing. We were seeing what we could do to make this thing do more, in terms of what visual imagery we could get from it. And we weren't after the kinds of things that most people were after. We weren't after the good signals. We were after the good image. And that's still pretty much what we're doing. And we were fairly unique in that, I think. In fact, John, when he was on the Council, kept saying, "How do I clone this?", thinking about us. And I said, "You can't, because we're too damn cheap. And we work too cheap, and we're not in the real world. And we probably never will be." But I mean, I don't have any problem with funding. I mean, I know a few people in the world probably could say that. I don't give a damn whether I get the money or not. If I get the money, I'll work. If I don't get the money, I'll work anyway. And I don't have any— You know, I'm just not a good person to talk to, when it comes to how do you push around and get money? I yell at the Council. I said, "Give me the goddamn money or else I'm not gonna do anything." And I did the same thing with the NEA. And I've never gone anywhere else for money. We tried it one year. We worked a whole bunch of foundations, and it was stupid. I said, "I'm not gonna waste my time on this. I'm not gonna spend my life hustling funds." I'm also not gonna grow. I'm gonna be a small organization. And this all works, you know? You know, I don't wanna grow. I don't wanna get any bigger. It's me and her. [laughter] And Hank. Used to be the pair[?]. And you know, we do what we do, and we've done it well. And you know, our problems are not the same as an organization that's trying to get bigger or to take on more of the world. And I think in that way, we have our own kind of uniqueness. I'm not sure what it is, but it's not like the rest of the problems that people run into when they're trying to hold together a large body of people. I just avoided all that. I kind of

HOCKING (Cont.): sunk my head in the ground, so it's not there. So... Is that anything? I mean, [laughs] am I going any direction that you want, Nathan?

MILLER HOCKING: I think there's one—

LYONS: Sure.

HOCKING: Not that you're paying me for this. Are you? [they laugh]

LYONS: Let's give Sherry a chance.

MILLER HOCKING: There's one brief story about funding second year, after this first year of 1971, \$50,000.

HOCKING: Oh, I know what you mean.

MILLER HOCKING: We were fairly naïve at that stage in the game, in terms of putting an organization together, running it, hiring people, all those kinds of basic things. Comes the second year, and we're informed that we need to write another grant application for this second year of funding. And we didn't write it, because we didn't need any money; we still had money from the \$50,000. So we went for two years on the first year, because we didn't get the fact

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 17 -

MILLER HOCKING (Cont.): that you submit grant applications every year for general operation expenses. It took us three years to figure that out. [laughter]

HOCKING: Well actually, we did wind up with the second year's funding, we got \$12,000 from the Council to build a video synthesizer with Nam June [inaudible]. And I think Nam June, [inaudible] or somebody said, "Give him some money or do something," because I don't remember making an application for that money.

MILLER HOCKING: No, it came kind of from above.

HOCKING: So, yeah.

MILLER HOCKING: But that machine then went down to WNET. That started— that became a part of the TV Lab down there.

HOCKING: Yeah, we put together their TV Lab structure in Binghamton, for that stuff.

MILLER HOCKING: And that also began this whole thrust that the Center now is focused on, of image processing and studio work for artists from around the country. And it began in that '71... And that's my funding story. [laughs]

LYONS: Not your final one[?].

MILLER HOCKING: Then we got un-naïve and started writing grant proposals seriously.

MAN: [inaudible]

LYONS: Well, I think really, what I'm kind of after is that certainly, if there was a pattern of activity, right?, that sort of, you know, spontaneously erupted, and very quickly, all over the country. Because New York State certainly, people working in video had a very different experience than people working in Utah. [inaudible]

HOCKING: [over Nathan] Well, what we were doing, it was— No, no, [inaudible].

GIANCOL[?]: No, it's pockets.

LYONS: Yeah, it was pockets all over the country.

HOCKING: What we started out doing primarily was lending out— [end of DVD one of six]

HOCKING: What we started out doing primarily was lending out stuff. We were an access center, essentially. I mean, we used to lend things to people from New York. They would come up to get the Portapaks, if they couldn't get 'em in the city. Joan Jonas used to drive up to get a projector that I kind of borrowed from the school and stuck in my closet. [laughter] She would come up and take that back to New York for— You know, and drive in snow storms. She

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 18 -

HOCKING (Cont.): would drive from New York to get this projector. So we did a lot of lending of equipment and supporting people on those levels. But I think most places were somehow tied into that access thing.

LEWITAN: Absolutely.

MAN: Yeah, we were.

LEWITAN: Because there was so little access available, you had to provide that kind of service.

LYONS: Well, when one considers the access to tools, a factor, certainly, a lot of organizations define themselves around very particular needs in a given period of time. You know, even if you sort of leap ahead, part of the conversation today is in the structure of media centers, is there even a need for access? Ok?

HOCKING[?]: Do you want an answer?

LYONS: No. Well, I don't want to open that up, I'm just trying...

MILLER HOCKING[?]: Not yet.

LYONS: ...to lay out the general territory.

HOCKING[?]: [inaudible] 'cause I don't know what's going on. [laughter; inaudible voices over each other]

LYONS: But what I'm trying to really get at is that in that free-spirited environment, right?, that it was probably the question of individual motivation, not the question of whether or not there was anybody there to help, right?, or to support the activity. A number of things occurred. The question in my mind is, if something like the New York State Council on the Arts begins to respond to this emerging field, what effect does that response have on the development of the field? Right? And we probably can trace varying histories in that. Ira, do you want to...

SCHNEIDER: Well, yeah. This is something I mentioned at our little dinner last night. And that is what I see as the Council funding, the effect of it immediately was that these various people who received the funding did not have to go to the commercial workplace, did not have to do commercial jobs in video for a number of years. Because of the Council funding, they were able to pursue this alternate type of video or video art, without the direct necessity of doing industrials or trade shows or little educational videotapes, whatever the marketplace determined would have to be done.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 19 -

HOCKING: Well, I'm a little confused on that, I guess. It seems to me that all the monies that were given, or primarily, the monies that were given by the Council went to organizations to maintain the organization, and not to maintain individuals. [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: [inaudible]

LYONS: Yeah, go ahead.

GIANCOLA: There's a legislative mandate, which you're correct about, Ralph, that the Council is not permitted to directly fund an individual. So according to the legislation that set it up, it funds organizations. And any individual may be funded through an organization that sponsors the individual. Hence, for example, if Juan Downey puts a grant application into the Council now, he'll most likely put it in through Ira's Foundation, still...

SCHNEIDER: He has one in now[?].

GIANCOLA: ...and Ira, I assume, being relatively sympathetic to the cost of video— The organizations do not operate to take off 75% [laughs; inaudible]

SCHNEIDER: No maximum of five. 5%.

GIANCOLA: 5% maximum is set by the Council, as well, right?

LYONS: Yeah.

GIANCOLA: That they can have. And so the answer is yes and no. Individuals have always been funded— When I was there, out of a \$1.2 million budget, 380,000 was mandated for individual artist projects. But it is interesting to note that the lion's share of the budget was not mandated for individual artist projects, it was mandated for organizational general operating.

HOCKING: I guess what I'm confused about, Ira...

SCHNEIDER: That translated into support for individual artist projects.

GIANCOLA: Well, some people questioned that. ...

SCHNEIDER: I know, [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: ... Some people thought that was much too much money to pay for people's heating bills that could[?] support artists.

HOCKING: I didn't know anyone at the time who wasn't working some other job. I didn't know there were people who were able to support themselves.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 20 -

SCHNEIDER: I didn't mean to say that you can survive in video just on grant monies. But it allowed a freer use of the medium, more innovative, creative use, rather than having to spend all your time, or most of your time, hustling jobs and doing them.

GIANCOLA: I think we're going to use an important point, if we don't acknowledge what you said as true in many instances; that there became such a thing as the professional media center; and that the Council was a very big part in there being—in people having full-time jobs in an art movement. And I tend to reinstate what you said; that although not everybody took advantage of it, there were people running media art centers, by virtue of Council funding, that I think may or may not have taken place quite the same way otherwise.

LYONS: And there was [inaudible] reinforced by NEA structure, in response to the medium.

GIANCOLA: Yeah, they drew their salary from a combination of NEA and NYSCA funds to run the center that they were running.

SCHNEIDER: Very rare, was it a full salary, thought. It was usually—

LEWITAN: Yes. [laughs] I think it's important to make that point.

GIANCOLA: Yeah. In 1979 dollars, it averaged somewhere around \$18,000.

LEWITAN: What did?

SCHNEIDER: Never did anyone in my office...

LEWITAN: In *history*, nobody [laughs] ever made that much money.

HOCKING[?]: That was your salary.

SCHNEIDER: Perhaps centers. Perhaps some centers.

GIANCOLA: Well, I'm talking about— Well, we can get to it later. But I saw the fiscal reports for what salaries were being made by people who were running media organizations. They were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, as high as thirty.

MAN: John, if it's appropriate—and even if it isn't...

GIANCOLA: Yeah, right.

MAN: But from my recollection, and to the point Ira's making I think I would support to some degree, in that in some cases, artists in the medium were salaried or funded for administrative work or line items that they were doing. And in some organizations, they weren't.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 21 -

GIANCOLA: That's right. It depends on how they applied and how they structured their organization. It was up to the individual organization.

MAN: In my view, some organizations supported the work of the artists who were administering it, and that's how the work got done. And in other cases, organizations were structured to enable artists to have the access to the equipment or to do [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: I think we should balance it out by saying that even in the case where someone was drawing an \$18,000 salary, their organization was entirely dedicated to the service of the creation of work, or the exhibition of work, or a combination of distribution, exhibition, and creation, or just distribution, as was the case with Electronic Arts Intermix. I know, but it was always in service, direct service. So yes, there were salaries. I think it's fair to say that the infusion of—one of the effects of the infusion of Council and NEA funding was that people could consider the option of not working commercially...

LEWITAN: Yeah, absolutely. That's true.

GIANCOLA: ...and set their financial structure up so that they could, full-time, serve the artist. Or call it what you will. Serve distribution, serve exhibition, whatever their major activity was.

LEWITAN: Contributing.

GIANCOLA: And it needs to be noted that even as late as 1979, no two media art centers in New York State were identical in their structure. I mean, they were individualistic creations.

LYONS: In the early stages.

GIANCOLA: No, as late as '84, when I left, they still were not— There were not a uniform code of what a media arts center should be.

HOCKING: Is there now?

GIANCOLA: No.

HOCKING: Are we getting closer? [laughter]

GIANCOLA: I don't know.

LYONS: No, we're getting smaller.

MILLER HOCKING: [inaudible]

LEWITAN: [inaudible]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 22 -

LYONS: Which may be part of this afternoon's discussion. But I wanted to sort of pick up that thread of the first intersection, because it stands to reason that there're certain kinds of decisions that are made, once you say, "We are going to fund video." And I'm not even sure how that occurred within something like the State Council on the Arts at the time that it did. Then logically, the question arises, Well, how are we going to distribute the funds? Ok. It's not just a question of funding, but then that marvelous term, criteria slips in. Right? And then people ponder, you know, in terms of endless hours of debate, what the priorities of the field should be. And then somehow there's some kind of mechanism that begins to speak in an all-knowing fashion, as to what is good for the field. Ok? And progressively, you have that coming forward. And then you have, certainly, dramatic shifts in the maturing of individual concerns with the use of the technology. You know, I can remember the endless debates, well into the evening, about the distinction between film and video. Ok? The issues of real time. You know, and how we masochistically sat around staring at monitors for three and four hours. [laughter] Certain criteria issues shift at that end in how, you know, we're behaving. Another force in this is obviously the technology itself and what is being developed, the enhancements, the sophistication, the accessibility. Alright? All of that starts to come together in some curious way. And subsequently, we wind up with something known as the Media Program of the New York State Council on the Arts. Which is responsive to a number of forces within the collective intelligence of public funding for the arts. Broad, general category. So what I'm trying to do is sort of creep up on the stages that many of us experienced that either, as in Ralph's instance, which is very important to cite, Ralph, I think, developed a unique perspective on the relevance of not caring about any of this. Ok? But other organizations either reacted, over-reacted, set up LYONS (Cont.): a certain kind of belief system in that voice coming from Downstate New York. It affected, I think, organizations in New York City variously; it affected organizations in Upstate New York, because I don't think it was until John's tenure that I ever saw any physical entity related to something called the Media Program. I think John was the first person from the Council that came up...

HOCKING: Lydia [inaudible]

WOMAN: Lydia?

GIANCOLA: No, I think that's [inaudible voices over each other] came to other...

LYONS: No. Lydia never came. The first...

HOCKING: Oh, I thought there was[?].

LYONS: ... association [inaudible voices over each other] I had in any relation to media program...

HOCKING: Lydia's boss.

MILLER HOCKING: Oh.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 23 -

LEWITAN: Oh, Peter Bracken[sp?].

GIANCOLA: Peter Bracken.

HOCKING: Yeah after.

[inaudible voices over each other]

LYONS[?]: You went to lunch with us, ok. The first grant that I ever got from the Council was done over the telephone. But ok. There was a voice at the other end saying, "What would you like to do this year?"

HOCKING: Yeah, [inaudible]. I mean, I was the guy—the only reason I got any money was because I was upstate and...

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, they had the mandate to come Upstate, and so...

HOCKING: ...they wanted to make sure I was a real person. So they made me come to New York.

SCHNEIDER: And we in New York City—

LYONS: Ok. All of you. Let's behave. Back. Margo, next stage, ok? That first intersection with the implications of some suggestion of a pattern of some funding from a state agency.

LEWITAN: I've been listening, because I realized that we had begun, as individuals coming together to look at work—it was really to share each other's work, to look and to share each other's work, and in certain instances, involve ourselves in group projects. And of course, my personal bias, because I came from the theater, has been in collaboration. So you know, your training does, to a certain extent, dictate the way in which you move through the universe. And there may be other people involved in the beginning of the Center's work that would remember it different, because they would be coming from a visual arts base, in their work in video and film. So I'll just say that as a matter of course. And then I looked up and saw the cameras, and I realized that I had mentioned Wendy Clarke, but I hadn't mentioned Shirley, who absolutely was seminal to everything that we ended up doing in video at the Center, because we went to the Tepee and worked with interactivity, and worked on collaborative projects, and worked on monitors, sculptured monitors, so that the head was on one monitor and the feet were on another, and we had walls of video, you know, in the very beginning, with half-inch stuff. So she really set the context in which all of our work proceeded. And Susan Milano, who was the early coordinator of the video program at the Center, and who ran with Shirley's ideas and created some of those collective projects. Now, just to get back to the question, because I wanna— [laughs] I just wanted to set the record straight for the camera.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 24 -

LEWITAN (Cont.): It's interesting. I think that without Council support, and without the NEA's support—and we got a heavy dose of support—we got more money from the NEA at the very early part than we did from the Council—I think we probably would have viewed our interaction with each other as avocational. Not the work itself, but the interaction or the networking. And we would have been doing whatever work we did, supporting ourselves in some other way. So in a sense, the formation of the organization as an entity independent of the individuals who worked there is probably the result of the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, because although we incorporated prior to... No, we existed without incorporating. We incorporated because you, in fact, had to be incorporated in order to be able to receive...

MAN: As a nonprofit.

LEWITAN: ...funds. I don't think we ever would've incorporated and become a corporation, had it not been that people said, "If you want some money, [laughs] you have to incorporate." Otherwise, we would've been an association of people who got a space and used the space and worked. So that superstructure, that corporate superstructure, I think is the direct result of the promise of support. And with that, comes a whole perception of the universe that I think in many instances, led us deeply... I don't know whether astray is right word. But it raised issues that probably were irrelevant to the creation of work, and in some cases, probably took us away from it. And certainly had an impact. So I mean, to say that we would have existed the same way, had it not been for that support, is absolutely not true. In other words, the coming of the LEWITAN (Cont.): not for profit support system to the work that we were doing had a profound impact on that work. And on our lives and the way in which our lives were conducted. I didn't mean to imply, John, that people were not getting salaries. It's just that I remember at the Center, we had to put down the salaries of people on the Council application, so we put down the salaries that were board approved, not the salaries that we got. [laughs] And the salaries—I've done that throughout the history. And I think at one point in the history of the organization, I had down there that the salary was \$31,000; and I think that year, if I was lucky, I pulled out fifteen. So... But this was all part of this illusion that you had to create that you were institutionally sound, right?

MAN: Yeah, right.

LEWITAN: If you were not, if you did not put down that you had a paid staff, there was something amiss. So the way in which the Center operated from early on was that the only person who got an absolute guaranteed salary was the front desk person, the person who had to be there to open up and had to be there to leave. That was the only person that ever got paid [laughs] regularly. And from that point forward, you know, the fees to the support system of the organization were really based on whether or not there was enough money to pay them. After this enormous push, somewhere in the middle of the Council history and the Endowment history, of artists fees, so that you suddenly— See, unlike some of the other people here and other people in the field, the Women's Interarts Center was never, with all of its media programming and all of the work that we did in the field, we were never viewed as a media

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 25 -

LEWITAN (Cont.): center. So we never got anything called general operating support. And we never got it in any of the programs for which we were supported. And we got supported in many different programs, because we were a multi-arts organization, but we never got general operating support. So I've never had that luxury of thinking—

GIANCOLA[?]: Well, Margo, wasn't general operating support later, as a guideline, than program support?

LEWITAN: Oh, absolutely. But in the very beginning, you know, money was less constricted. In other words, they gave you a grant because they thought what you were doing needed to be done. Right? And there weren't five paragraphs of how you were supposed to spend that money. When it became clear that there was this push to support "artists," quote. And I always wondered what that meant, you know, since what we were doing—I mean, we considered ourselves to be working in the field. We were artists, we did our own work; we were artists, we supported other artists' work. This distinction that was made between the organizational infrastructure of the field and those individuals who were in and out of that structure, but not intimately associated with it, I thought was an adversarial concept that was misplaced early on. But it had an effect, because you ended up having to look at the way in which the money was dispersed differently. So... I'm probably getting off on a tangent; I apologize.

MAN: Should we break soon?

MAN: Yeah. Perhaps put some of the videotape [inaudible; inaudible voices over each other]

MAN: Don't we have a break structured?

MAN: [inaudible] change tapes in back. This is...

LEWITAN: Oh, great.

MAN: Ok.

MAN: ... In order for this to [inaudible], it has to be on videotape.

MAN: Yeah. [end of DVD two of six]

LYONS: Seeing that we've covered a certain territory. The plot will thicken from this point, out of our group recollections of the history, which by no means is the full history. There's a lot more that, probably, we've forgotten than we remember through all of this. But it might be important to just respond to any questions you might have about the period that we've just covered. And then we'll kind of pick it up and try to frame some relationship with a series of underlying issues, some of which we haven't discussed, that might warrant discussion in more detail. Suggested by my comments about not only a question of the effect of funding agencies, but the effect of technology, certain transitions in mission, alright? I think it was Ralph that

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 26 -

LYONS (Cont.): periodically mentioned, or Ira, the movement, ok? The notion of alternative, and how long is an alternative an alternative? In the dynamics of, say... So I think in all fairness, seeing you've listened to us drone on, are there any issues that you'd like addressed out of this period, or any specific questions you might have [inaudible voice] on what we've covered.

MAN: I hope this doesn't sound [inaudible], because it doesn't completely relate to funding, but actually, it relates to a unique historical characteristic of early video that I find intriguing and curious and potentially distressful. [inaudible] so I made a list of artists last night, some of the pioneers [inaudible]. Richard Serra, Peter Campus, [inaudible], William Wegman, [inaudible], Vito Acconci, Terry Mann[?], Terry Fox, Howard Fried[?], [inaudible], Bruce Nauman. These people have two things in common that I saw, and that is they're considered to be major pioneers in the medium. They also haven't made work in five to ten, fifteen years. Would you, the panel, like to respond to the fact that video art does not seem to inspire a lot of loyalty in a lot of its early [inaudible], that it's kind of a new phenomenon to have the innovators kind of desert the medium fifteen years later [inaudible]. I guess Bruce Nauman did something about five years ago, but other than that, I think most people on this list haven't made tapes in five or ten years.

SCHNEIDER[?]: That's because your list is incomplete.

MAN: Yeah.

MAN: Yeah.

MAN: Yeah. No, and I realize that there are people...

SCHNEIDER: I mean, Richard Serra? He made one videotape, and then was in one videotape.

MAN: Right.

SCHNEIDER: He's not an [inaudible voice] artist that works in videotape.

MAN: [inaudible]

WOMAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: There was an attraction—this may help, Dale[sp?]—there was an attraction to the medium from artists who were working in other media, that was—how should we say?—transitory. I mean, they did their experiment with the medium, they satisfied themselves, and they returned to other media or went on to other media. That's one part of what you're saying. And that answers one part of what you're saying. There are also video pioneers who are not only still working, but are *highly* recognized internationally. So you could make examples both ways. I don't know if that helps answer.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 27 -

MAN: Well, I knew the list was incomplete. But I also was...

GIANCOLA: It's no comprehensive, yeah.

MAN: There's a substantial amount of numbers of people...

SCHNEIDER[?]: Now, those were also mainly the Castelli group.

GIANCOLA: Yeah. The Leo Castelli group. Out of the Castelli group, out of Downey, who was represented by Castelli for a while, right?

SCHNEIDER: Well, on the video, yes.

GIANCOLA: Yeah, in the video.

SCHNEIDER: As was Gillette, and Beryl Korot, Hermaine Fried[?], and one or two others from the second group. The first group was... Now, Vito Acconci was upstairs at Sonnabend. And he still does videos occasionally. And you— what were those other names you had? Did you have [inaudible voice] Keith Sonier?

MAN: No.

SCHNEIDER: Because he stopped doing video, as far as I can tell.

MAN: Well, Peter Campus.

GIANCOLA: He just did an installation, right?

SCHNEIDER: Well, yeah, but it's an old installation. Peter works mainly in photography now. [inaudible voice] But his installations, his early installations, were some of the best video I've ever seen. And they were just— There's basically a history of video, it's called Video Sculpture, an installation show in Cologne, Germany, and then in Berlin, Germany. Just ended in Berlin about a week ago. And it was made up of about forty of these old standard video installations by the early video workers. Including the piece called *Life Cycle*, by Frank Gillette and myself.

MAN: What about Doug Davis?

SCHNEIDER: He still makes videos occasionally.

MAN: He does?

SCHNEIDER: Sure.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 28 -

GIANCOLA[?]: He does. Paid is still making video.

SCHNEIDER: Paik, certainly.

GIANCOLA[?]: Downey is still making video. How early did Mary Lucier start?

SCHNEIDER: Not that early.

LYONS: No. Probably middle seventies.

GIANCOLA: Middle seventies. And there are some people who weren't pioneers, who started a little later, who are still making video.

SCHNEIDER[?]: Yeah, Tony Oursler.

GIANCOLA: Yeah. It'd be interesting to try and look at it statistically, Dale—you raise a really interesting question—and say, "Well, you know, if you made a list of every single video artist you could name, how many of them have worked consistently over at least five years, or seven years, or ten years, versus those that, for one reason or another, found the medium intriguing but A, either too expensive, B, that there wasn't a strong enough support community or whatever?"

LEWITAN: Or payback.

GIANCOLA: Payback's a word I've heard. You know, payback is not just financial, it's also aesthetic satisfaction or feedback. Not enough distribution of their work, right? Interesting question.

LEWITAN: I think it's probably true in other mediums as well, however. You know, I mean, if the network within that artform in which you're working does not allow your work to go where you would like it to go, you tend to look at a different direction to express yourself. I mean, I think that's certainly happened with a lot of theater[?].

LYONS: Was there anything about early expectations, and how one characterized distribution or audience or support, direct support, out of the work that one did, that relates to Dale's question?

GIANCOLA: There was a wonderful conference held in '79 in Rome, Video Roma. And Don Foresta, who wound up at the American Center, wrote an interesting account in Paris, right? Wrote an interesting account of the dialog that took place between American videographers and European videographers at that conference. He found there was sort of not a meeting of the minds. And one of the questions the Europeans had of the Americans—and this may address this a little—was, If you're working in an alternative art form, why are you concerned with being on Public Television? [laughter] And why are you—that's national television. And why

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 29 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): are you concerned with upgrading your equipment so frequently?" You know, because to the Europeans, the Americans sort of had this... You know, when color came in in Portapaks, a lot of artists switched to color and tried to upgrade their equipment. Access centers always made keeping abreast of the latest technologies an issue, even if they were doing it in a low end user way, you know, low cost. They did try to work in new... And the Americans said, "What do you mean?" And the Europeans said, "Well, when we work as alternative media, we don't care about mass audience." And the Americans had to confront themselves and say, "What is there in the American psyche?" And the best Foresta could come up with in analyzing that was that there was a kind of reformist attitude in American alternative media people that wasn't present in the European. Foresta took the liberty of linking it to kind of Puritan American sense of you do something different so that it affects the larger system; whereas the European ideal was you do something different to do something different. And whoever gets it gets it. It's a little more Eastern, you know, in its philosophy.

MAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: It's a what?

MAN: It's utopal[?], in that Americans always want to fix it[?].

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 30 -

GIANCOLA: So that, yeah, the encounter sort of revealed that there was— maybe some generalization could be made a little bit about Americans creating alternative models, so that they would—I think that's the way it works in theater. Experimental theater, in the history of theater, sometimes has some of its tenets adapted into mainstream theater...

LEWITAN: I think that's true.

GIANCOLA: ...if they're successful, right? And that's a criteria for success: Can we have an impact on the broadcast system? Can we change society? Maybe some hopes were dashed along those lines, early. You know, that the curve thing of change wasn't going to be fast or facile or...

LEWITAN: I don't think, though, that that really explains the desire to keep the technology, to keep the updated technology at the fingertips of the user. That, I don't—I mean, that might be part of it, but I think also it was just a question of getting an image that looked different. I mean, I think, you know, even if you weren't going to a mass audience, even if you were doing installation pieces, certainly the clarity of the image, the depth of focus, all of those questions were raised in and of themselves for the creation of a specific piece by a specific person, not simply will it make it—You know, will John Godfrey allow it on Channel 13?

GIANCOLA: Yes. But I think to the European eye, the perspective of these particular Europeans, it was an American preoccupation with materialism...

LEWITAN: Oh, sure.

GIANCOLA: ...even though they were working in an alternative art form to the so-called materialist culture. How can you be counterculture and be so materialistic, was the question.

LEWITAN: Except that in Europe, you know, you have resources available to you that the individual artist over here dreams about. I mean, and it says something a little bit precious about the European artist indulging in that particular form of criticism, given what the resources are over there and what artists who have some entry into that system have available to them. But you look—

GIANCOLA: Well, I could debate that; I'm not going to.

LEWITAN: Yeah, I mean, when we were in Graz at the installation in Graz of video, both in the making of the tapes and the access to the public television facilities and the funding available for independent artists over there for the creation of broadcast tapes, and in terms of what was made available to the American artists to create the installation in Graz, it was staggering, in terms of resources. Now, it may not be across the board and it may not be in every city, but certainly, in Germany and in Austria and in France, under Mitterand, it was pretty amazing.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 31 -

GIANCOLA: Yeah. But again, we're talking about [inaudible; audible voice] resources, versus private ownership. I think the thing that struck the Europeans was the degree to which American strive for private ownership of...

LEWITAN: I see what you're saying.

GIANCOLA: ...rather expensive equipment...

LEWITAN: I see what you're saying.

GIANCOLA: ...when you're making countercultural style products. They couldn't resolve buying in—literally, financially buying into that much expense. I think it's a moot point, too.

MAN: But I think it relates to funding [inaudible] as well.

GIANCOLA: Sure does.

MAN: Because having worked in a not for profit and currently working in the commercial sector, in the commercial sector you're technology driven in order to be competitive. You get the barrage[?] because you meet the guy down the street and [inaudible] waiting for customers. My experience at the art school in the creation of media pieces, particularly those that related to wider distribution and installation, is the access to the tools gives your work a particular  
MAN (Cont.): look, feel, image, quality, et cetera, based in part in the funding patterns established by NYSCA and the NEA, at some point in the evolution in the period of time you're talking about, pushed things in the direction that you've described very well.

GIANCOLA: Unfortunately—and it's a nice thing to bring out now—the push from the constituency to upgrade technology came simultaneously with the economic freeze in available funds. It was one of the points of great, great conflict, when the New York State Council on the Arts leveled off—i.e., it was receiving the same amount every year rather than increases from Albany, so it was having to do—You know, it was having to do more with the same, which I think means more with less, right?, when you factor in inflation and cost of living. That's when simultaneously, there was this pressure on the Council to buy new equipment, to upgrade equipment. It was a very unfortunate convergence because the Council simply could not respond financially to that. You know, so again, Synapse upstate and the Lab Downstate, there were these two windows into broadcast. You know, anybody could get you to an Ampex quadraplex machine; you know, could help you make your window to broadcast.

SCHNEIDER: Well, I think that's where they had the development of media centers that provided, like, the top-notch equipment that's necessary for broadcast television coming about in the eighties, where, like, online and standby—

GIANCOLA: That answer[?].

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 32 -

SCHNEIDER: —where you go to commercial houses, but you get a special rate, through a program that's a nonprofit program.

GIANCOLA: Yeah.

HOCKING: The thing that's always struck me—and I used to scream at John all the time when he was on the Council—why are you putting so damn much money in the broadcast direction?

GIANCOLA: Why bother?

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. I agree.

HOCKING: What a stupid thing to do.

GIANCOLA: That's more akin to almost the European sensibility about why do you wanna [inaudible]

HOCKING: One of the reasons why I say that is that really early on—I think it was about '71, '72—Channel 13 came up to our place and made a tape of The Song off[?] New York that [inaudible] made in our facilities. And David...

VOICES: Loxton.

HOCKING: ...Loxton, right. Saw this tape that one of my kids had made on campus of this Bedford-Stuyvesant incident, Stealing...

SCHNEIDER: Angels?

HOCKING: The Angel's tape, right.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. Yeah, great tape.

HOCKING: He said, "I wanna put that on television." I said, "How can you do that? It's [inaudible; laughter]. You're not allowed to put that on television." "Oh, we'll put it on, don't worry about it." And they put it on.

SCHNEIDER[?]: They rescanned it.

HOCKING: Yeah. Sure. So the point being that anything that the television people wanted to put on, they would put on. So you didn't have to prepare anything for them. What you need to do was to convince them that what you had had to be seen. And that was the big issue, I think, primarily. I mean, they just stopped everybody, said, "Don't get near us. We don't want you." Maybe a few. A couple here, a couple there. But it was always stupid, as far as I was

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 33 -

HOCKING (Cont.): concerned, to even think about trying to broadcast things. And then he's putting money into broadcast, and I'm about ready to kill him, you know?

GIANCOLA: We're not talking about money. You know, it was a few situations, but it was a great deal of money. So just those couple of situations ate up about two-hundred-thousand a year. And the individual artists were only getting three-hundred-eighty-thousand a year.

HOCKING: We could've bought people all the equipment they needed and they could take it home with them, for that kind of money.

GIANCOLA: Well, if there had been any kind of unity involved in the dialog, which is to say if there had been, for example, a low end user agreement kind of statewide that people were going to go for...

SCHNEIDER: That's what we attempted. [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: ...informal tools... But by— Yeah, the original vision. By the time '79 came, you know, reaching back for something like that was out of the question because there were now fiefdoms. There were now these media centers, these operating budgets, these kingdoms unto themselves in close communication with us.

HOCKING: How much of this had to do, then, with keeping the Council happy? The members of the Council.

GIANCOLA: Well...

HOCKING: And acknowledging their wants and needs and what they recognized as of real worth?

GIANCOLA: I think there were two parallel developments in the seventies. And for the audience's sake, I was the program director from '79 to '84, so I can only speak of the seventies. Inasmuch as anybody in a new job as to learn the recent history to sort of do his or her job— You know, you go into a job and you learn there was this six or seven years before you that you're picking up on. So I know about it secondhand. There was a development in the culture away from institutions being responsive to their constituencies. In other words, in the early seventies, because of the enormous amount of public demonstration in the sixties, many kinds of institutions had this kind of credo of being responsive. If you weren't being responsive to your constituency, you weren't a good institution. Because there was so much public protest through that decade. I think over the seventies, we saw a waning. You know, with the Nixon administration and with new kinds of attitudes that were coming in, we saw more of a regression back to an older institutional model, which was institutions have to manage their constituencies. And you know, your constituency shouldn't get out of hand. You know, and they should more or less follow what we lay down. And I think dialog between constituents GIANCOLA (Cont.): and institutions started to wane in that decade. And I don't think the

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 34 -

Council was exceptional in that development, I think it was paralleling itself to what other institutions were doing. It was just, you know, being a good institution, and leading[?] the idea of constantly listening.

LYONS: But at the point, John, that you intersect with the Council, I think that there's more that can be characterized, because you had the wonderful task of adjusting to an assessment about the field...

GIANCOLA: Yes.

LYONS: ...on the part of the Council. And that was essentially that the Media Program was gradually perceived as being a preferred constituency within public arts funding, in the sense that many of the organizations were receiving fifty to eighty percent of their operating budgets from Council funds, while other organizations being served by the Council might be receiving ten, fifteen, twenty percent of their operating support from Council funds. This came to a head during, I think, the cycle of the first major recession, right? There were financial adjustments that the Council felt it had to make. And I think the crisis that formed the Media Alliance resulted in the fact of a very heavy hand coming down, without any forewarning. A number of organizations flatly zero funded. Going from a 50% or an 80% in the preceding year to zero funded in the subsequent year. A very demoralizing event.

GIANCOLA: So it affects[?] the weakest. Yeah.

LYONS: [inaudible] right? So that's part of the climate. What I'd really like to track—hopefully, this afternoon, so we don't lose sight of it—is that change in attitudes of practice, right?, in relation to the institutional support systems. Because many individual artists parted ways, right? They went much more independent. They didn't rely on media access centers, because the equipment wasn't enabling them to respond to the issue of broadcast standards. They were in the interesting circumstance of having to survive. And I think it's a natural factor, beyond the kind of entry level exuberance, that conditions in one's life change as one gets older. And as a result, there are other needs. And I think this is all part of tracking something about the emergence of video. With the examples that are being identified, when does video stop becoming—or has it stopped becoming—an alternative? When is the movement no longer a movement? And essentially, why?

GIANCOLA: And essentially...?

LYONS: Why?

GIANCOLA: Why video?

LYONS: No...

SCHNEIDER: Has stopped becoming a movement.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 35 -

GIANCOLA: Oh, ok. Wow, that's a big question. I can just say—

HOCKING: [inaudible] why? Yeah. [laughter] Right. [inaudible voice]

GIANCOLA: I could say two minutes on the climate that I inherited, which will reflect back on '74 to '79. When I took the position, I took the position with the clear understanding that there was a communication crisis between the constituency and the Council. That was stated aboveboard, and that I should only take the position if I were interested in trying to resolve that conflict. So to that end, all people who were current candidates for the position, unbeknownst to the constituency, were invited to the meetings that the constituency had with the Council. In other words, those meetings had all the standing candidates for the job in the room. And only the Council knew that. And the constituency was at the point of sort of having these confrontational meetings with the Council in '79, and anybody who was an applicant for the job should see this and try to give their opinion about how it might be—I believe the word the Council was using was healed. [laughter]

LYONS[?]: Healed?

GIANCOLA: Healed.

LYONS[?]: In what sense, John?

GIANCOLA: Cured.

LYONS[?]: Oh, oh, cured. [inaudible voice] Not heeled.

GIANCOLA: The Council had already [laughter] done this zeroing thing, where it tried to sort of shock the media constituency into following its guidelines more seriously. And these organizations had been zeroed, and there were cuts felt. And that caused such an uproar that the Council saw that that was *not* the approach. You know? And that speaks, I think, about how the situation deteriorated somewhat between '75 and '79. And all that I could make out of it was... Well, there was a joke on the floor of the Council when I took the job. One of the program directors came up to me and I said, "Well, how would you characterize what's been happening to the Media Program?" And she said to me, "Well," she said, "You know," she said, "In 1971, video and audio were the darling infants of the Council. And now they're sort of gawky teenagers with acne, who won't get a job." [laughter] In other words, they've grown up, but they haven't grown up. And I said, "Well, you know, what's one criterion that the Council [inaudible]?" And she said, "Well, funding from additional sources hasn't matured in the field." And what the field didn't know was, of course, that the Council was getting that from Albany. The Council didn't invent that problem, didn't decide that unilaterally. The Council was answerable to the larger state government. And you know, messages leaked out from Albany, from inside, outside, all kinds of sources. And apparently, the Media Program GIANCOLA (Cont.): was the star of this problem. Of all the Council programs, it had the

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 36 -

bigest percentage of people with high percentage of Council funding being their total budget. And apparently, from '74 to '79, the Council had sent signals to all constituents. There had been messages delivered that more support from the outside would be part of what continued to give you your Council funding. In other words, the rules were changing. So if Ira's first grant is the sterling example at that pole, you know, all that money, then by the mid-seventies, with what was happening to the economy in general, what was happening to the mood of institutions versus constituencies, the Council was in a position to make demands. You know. And the field, the joke about the field was—the joke I heard from a constituent in the field was: The Council made us pregnant, and now they don't want to marry us.

HOCKING: Well, that's kind of strange, then, because...

GIANCOLA: And— What?

HOCKING: Wasn't the Council always saying that we are only going to give you a percentage of your [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Not always, because the testimonials that you and Ira gave actually were part of the misconception fostered. Somebody called you down to New York and... you know. And that didn't happen to everybody quite so dramatically. But during the days when they were

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 37 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): flush and when their budget doubled in one year, that caused a money surge to the constituents. And for some reason, the constituents didn't say to themselves, "This must be temporary."

HOCKING: I was just thinking of the guidelines of the Council itself, as they were offered in all these publications.

GIANCOLA: Yes. No...

HOCKING: They do say [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: ...it happened slowly. What happened is that the Council went into print every year differently, over how to— You know, every time the rules changed, the Council announced them.

SCHNEIDER[?]: The change?

GIANCOLA: Yeah.

HOCKING: 'Cause I thought it was always like that. I didn't realize it was always [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Well, the Council was never established to be the sole funder...

HOCKING: Yeah.

GIANCOLA: ...of an organization, you're correct.

SCHNEIDER[?]: I always thought that you could not get more than 50% of your budget covered.

LEWITAN: But for the most part, that was true. I mean, even in the Media Program, it was true, for the most part.

SCHNEIDER[?]: [over Lewitan; inaudible]

LEWITAN: I mean, it wasn't— But in most programs other than media, you were lucky if you got ten to twenty percent of your budget covered. So that was what the big...

GIANCOLA: the Media Program was quite a fiscal exception at the Council when I came in '79. And part of my mandate was: Clean this up. You know what I mean? Don't rock the boat. Don't alienate anybody, just do the impossible. You know, try to turn this around. You know, everybody should be happy. That kind of thing.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 38 -

LYONS: John, in this climate, it seems that two decisions start to be made. How organizations respond— And I think it's also important to identify that, you know, the Council is not the sole source of funding for the media community. There're some private foundations that start to appear. I guess the Rockefeller fund...

GIANCOLA: Markle.

LYONS: ...NEA. There are certainly caps in relation to the issue of practice, is with us for a period of time.

GIANCOLA: But you can't count caps as separate from the Council, certainly.

LYONS: Northern New York Foundation [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Because that's a re-granting. That's Council re-granting structure.

LYONS: Right. Except that a mechanism was created to support artists directly, to circumvent the legislative intent.

GIANCOLA: Yeah.

LYONS: And that happened very early.

GIANCOLA: Yeah. And let me say that in the course of anything that we discussed that was a conflict or a difficulty, that category was never a difficulty.

LYONS: The funding of artists?

GIANCOLA: Yeah. The category of funding of artists was never a contentious issue. The artists never came down and screamed at the Council for that.

LYONS: They screamed at caps for that.

GIANCOLA: Basically, the conflict was between funded organizations who served artists and the Council.

LYONS: Ok. But then as I recall—and check on this—there's another response within the Council that identifies something like the arts for television.

GIANCOLA: Well, to tell you the truth, when I came in '79, the people who hired me demonstrated that the Council had something up its sleeve. Not only did it think that too much money was being given to this field through carelessness— And they were willing to put as much blame on the program staff on the field; they weren't pinning it to anybody. But my predecessor was categorized as being a little less than analytical. [laughter] And without casting aspersions, they wanted someone to be more analytical, to make more visitations, to

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 39 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): stay closer and see more. Not to spy, but to observe more by going to see, you know? And they whispered in my ear at the same time, that the Council was very interested in the kind of mileages that the NEA was getting out of *Dance in America*. They thought if they had something like that to show Albany as part of what they do...

SCHNEIDER[?]: Broadcast presence.

GIANCOLA: Broadcast presence. In other words, the pressure on me was, What should we really be doing for these people that we call the constituency? And can we take part of that money and create a larger broadcast presence? And the constituency was onto that. In other words, part of why they were protesting to the Council was that most of them knew that the Council was thinking of taking money away from artist video and putting it into... And the constituents knew how much money it would take to get involved in broadcast, that it could take the whole budget, easily, just to make a little dent. And that was also part of the mandate of the position, that I should not take the position if I weren't seriously ready to explore that with the Council.

LYONS: Yeah, but one of the things we experienced...

GIANCOLA: And we did develop those guidelines.

LYONS: ...out of that period of time is an incredible attrition institutionally. That if you look at the demographics, just, say, in Upstate New York, in terms of patterns of activity, what institutions existed just prior to this period of time...

GIANCOLA: And which ones failed.

LYONS: ...that I would say that out of a possible ten that you might identify across Upstate New York, there are essentially two left, with the re-emergence of some form of activity in a third. And we had certainly spread, from Buffalo to Ithaca to Bingham, an incredible network of service, in a variety of ways, to the Upstate community. So one ponders, you know, what effect this transition had. I can't analyze New York City, but I have a feeling that we saw a comparable amount of attrition. So that the original...

GIANCOLA: This is prior to '79.

LYONS: Right. The original support structure that was designed at one level—organizations in service of communities, individual artists—there's been an incredible attrition. And secondly, you know, the pattern of artists relating to those resources seems to have changed dramatically. Ira mentioned online. Online is always being brought forward as *the solution* to that...

GIANCOLA: To that loss.

LYONS: To that loss. A question in a lot of people's minds is, is that really the solution?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 40 -

LEWITAN: Well, it's one of 'em. [inaudible voice] Yeah, I mean, it's not a— If I might interject here, I think that the point that I was raising last night when we had dinner and we started— Well, we could do[?] the whole symposium, two hours last night. That you could point to, as a turning point and say, "Gee, if it hadn't quite played out this way, how things would've changed," was to confuse historically, both at the time that organizations were forming as corporate structures in order to be able to receive money, and then at this point in history, when organizations were being told that they could not look to support from the government as the way in which to continue. There was a great confusion between solving a problem and developing a philosophical base. In other words, the Council had X amount of money. There was pressure upon it to reduce the amount of money to the field, or to individual organizations within the field, to bring them in line with the level of support that other organizations in other media were getting. And instead of saying, "This is the pressure, this is the problem, how do we as a field—meaning the individual artists, the organizations, and the funding sources—address it?," it was perpetrated upon all and sundry in a context of good and bad. A good organization had this kind of structure; a bad organization had that kind of structure. All of this paternalistic language, which John gave examples of, in terms of, you know, what was the field, in terms of its growth from infant to adolescent to... I mean, all of this kind of loaded language, which continues to be used and is adversarial at its base, and causes one to compare, in terms of a graded scale, organizations and individuals, and the kind of work, and the seriousness of the work, and the art of the work, as opposed to the access of LEWITAN (Cont.): the work. All of this way of dealing with limited resources, instead of approaching the limited resources collectively, I think has a large measure to do with why there are fewer places available now undertaking this kind of work. Because it led to a dispersal, as opposed to a refocusing of energy.

LYONS: I've got to get John to shake it out.

GIANCOLA: Well, that falls under my analytical category of— As far as I could make out, ok?, the Council was modifying itself to be more like what institutions were becoming. And institution, I think, has a life. And I think it's self-survival is very— You know, we talk about bureaucracies always seeing to their own survival first, right? I think what you're referring to is that time when the Council stopped having planning meetings with the constituency, as an M.O. In other words...

LEWITAN: Absolutely.

GIANCOLA: ...the Council "matured." And is use this word in quotation marks, ok? Because I personally prefer Margo's model of communication, and I use it in my own person work. But the Council matured to the point where it was no longer meeting directly with its constituents to determine how it should proceed. It was entering...

MAN: Senility. [Lewitan laughs]

GIANCOLA: It was entering [inaudible].

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 41 -

LEWITAN: Yes, that's exactly right. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: It was entering middle age.

MAN: I'm just building on maturing. [laughter; inaudible voices]

GIANCOLA: Because I think senility's a kind of really losing the context of where you're at. And I think the Council...

LEWITAN: That's what happened.

MAN: That's what I think happened.

LEWITAN: That is precisely what happened.

GIANCOLA: I think the Council was advancing. I mean, I say this definitely in quotation marks, because it's all relative to how you're looking. But the Council was advancing into becoming an organization the state wanted it to be, which was not an organization that sort of met with its constituents to find out what we should do next. A motor vehicle bureau doesn't meet with you to find out what color plates you want next year. In other words, the Council GIANCOLA (Cont.): was becoming more of a hierarchical institution, speaking one way. And the inevitability of that, given the tenor of the times, was almost guaranteed. I don't know how the Council could survive as a product of the sixties, you know, operating in a sixties M.O., or what we call new Japanese style management [laughs], in to the eighties. I think that this was inevitable. And I think it caused great concern...

LEWITAN: I don't think it was inevitable, I think that's the only place that...

GIANCOLA: ...among constituents who found themselves cut off.

LEWITAN: I think that our major point of difference is whether it was inevitable or not. Because I think what ended up happening was that instead of being a circumstance where the field—whatever the field was; it's not just media—where what our goal was, was to increase the viability, the creation, the growth and strength of the art in the State of New York; that instead of working together to achieve that goal, an adversarial construct was begun between the field and the Council.

GIANCOLA: Not by the Council deliberately, though.

LEWITAN: Well, but so much a part of their specific way of doing business.

GIANCOLA: It was incumbent on a new governor, a new governor's style; a new governor who sends his men and women into the agency as staff, appoints them right in, without asking

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 42 -

anybody. And I'm not talking about Carey, I'm talking about any time there's a change of governor. I'm talking about a process, ok? And what happens is that the institution finds that it can't be the institution that it was. This is not a—I mean, people don't sit around and talk about this. They don't ever stop and say, "Gee, we can't be what we were; what should we be?" It just happens organically over the weeks. You actually find yourself—And the Council's a highly defensive organization in the state picture of organizations. It's constantly defending itself and justifying its existence. Kitty Carlisle Hart's been hugely successful in convincing Albany that arts are good for business. I mean, the machinations that arts council people have to go through just to get the bundle of money of which you get a part—and you're spared those machinations, largely—it's a whole 'nother dynamic. And it's sad. I mean, it's always sad when a beautiful process, a human communication process gets turned into something more rigid. But I'm afraid that's what had happened by the time I'd come in. And I was delighted to see that program staff was still afforded 100% latitude to go visit and talk as we wished, and have our own lives. Nobody watched us. And we could go and make bonding with the people. And then—how do you say?—rock what was going on, [laughter] and come back and talk the panel to death until they understood it. You know, we could still operate covertly, under this growing rigidity. But I think to see it negatively is to call it growing rigidity; and to see it positively is the Council becoming a permanent state agency by playing the rules of what that means, you know?

LYONS: Ok, then would you characterize—and this is an oversimplification—that one of the essential functions of a state arts council in the earlier period, before this transition, was advocacy for the field, and the second stage seems to be a response to the bureau of the budget?

GIANCOLA: No. I think that's oversimplified. I think the first stage...

LYONS: Well, I said it was an oversimplification, [inaudible voices] but I'm trying to shift off.

GIANCOLA: It's actually, since they never stopped being advocates, ever—No matter what shape it takes, no matter how many Chamber of Commerce dinners they have to go through, they're always advocating to Albany that this has to stay, this has to grow.

LYONS: No matter what the form.

GIANCOLA: Well, no. Albany's saying it can't stay in that form. And of course, the Council makes relative internal decisions about what is losing your soul and what is not, as it makes changes. And it's just people, and they're just doing what they can. And they don't always have the vision they should, you know what I mean? But it's a little more like in the beginning, the Council asked the field, "What should we be?" And the field gave the Council five or six years of hard information about what it should be. And that's what really built the Council, the GIANCOLA (Cont.): fields, the various disciplines influencing it. And then it reached a stage

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 43 -

where it sort of had enough information about the fields, and it started asking the state, “What should we be?” You know, to sort of balance it out.

SCHNEIDER[?]: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Well, the state— See, the big thing is Rockefeller and after Rockefeller. As long as Rockefeller was there, the state Council—the program directors could go to work nude, see? And we could say that was an important part of the aesthetic experience. [laughter]

HOCKING[?]: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Unless we met the—I’m exaggerating, of course. But unless we met the constituents nude, for example, we couldn’t truly sense what their aesthetic was. I mean, Rockefeller was *highly* visionary with this. And what’s the example I told at dinner last night? There was one year where the state didn’t give him an increase in the arts council, and he didn’t sign the state budget for that year, and went away for the weekend. He wouldn’t sign the state budget until they gave the Council an increase. He held up the entire financial structure of the state until they changed their mind. That’s Rockefeller. Nobody expected Hugh Carey—nobody who knew Hugh Carey expected Hugh Carey to have Nelson Rockefeller’s relationship to art. And the Council got real nervous; you know, big change. And lo and behold, the Council had to change. You know, you can fund this, but we don’t think the fiscal GIANCOLA (Cont.): analysis is strong enough, so... You know what I mean? New rules. “You can fund this, but we better darn well be a portion of their funding; we don’t want to create organizations.” You know, new rules. New rules that got passed along. “Sorry, we can’t meet with you guys to find out where we have to go next. Albany’s telling us.” It’s a change. But don’t you think that the times, the changing times supported that change? I mean...

LEWITAN: No.

MILLER HOCKING: Yeah, I— No, I think it was more...

GIANCOLA: Well, yeah. Don’t you think— Yeah, America was moving away from a constituency based communication and back to hierarchical...

MILLER HOCKING: There was no question...

GIANCOLA: Yeah.

MILLER HOCKING: ...it was inevitable in that sense. But I think that as a part of an institution— And the word, even, I think is kind of bizarre, given what all of us [laughter] were as groups. I mean, we were not the Museum of Modern Art.

LEWITAN: No, hardly.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 44 -

MILLER HOCKING: I mean, I think there was a whole section of this dynamic that occurred because of that. We were institutions that were created by the Council, largely.

GIANCOLA: You were institutionalized, yeah.

MILLER HOCKING: [laughs] Yes. [laughter] I'm not gonna touch that.

GIANCOLA: Well, that's the, "You made us pregnant, but you didn't wanna marry us." I mean, "you made us become an institution, but now..." And I said to Margo last night when we were debating it, I said, "Gee, it's almost as if the Council was saying, 'Ok, here's the next stage in how you have to be an institution,' and the field said, 'Wait a minute. That's just not us.'"

LEWITAN: I don't even think many of us were smart enough to do *that*. I think basically what we said was, [inaudible voice] "Oh, ok. Well, now, how do we do what it is you're telling us to do?"

MILLER HOCKING: I think that's exactly what happened.

LEWITAN: And what ended up happening—I mean, had we been smart enough to tell you, "Forget it," right?, and just do—If we had understood...

GIANCOLA: Some were.

LEWITAN: ...as a group.

GIANCOLA: Some did.

LEWITAN: Not too many. That we knew more than you did about what we did, or at least we knew more than some of the foundation officers. And I don't mean by, "you," NYSCA, but I mean the support system. If we had understood what our strengths were, in terms of what we did and how we did it, and not tried to adopt the corporate model, the business school model of how an organization was to be run, there probably would be more of us around now than there are. Because those models did not come with the support system. In other words, the fact that museums and symphony orchestras, for at least a while there, were able to get endowed or get lots of support from other sources than the government, just did not pass on into media. I mean, there were maybe three places that you could go. You could go to Rockefeller, less so to Ford, you could go to Markle. And you could go to the National Endowment and NYSCA. You were not getting, especially in New York City, any kind of significant corporate support. Nor did you *ever* get any significant corporate support, except in broadcast. So we were told to go and do this, and then we were told to go and do this and earn money, because you needed to have earned income to offset the contributed income. And then you completely annihilated the purpose for most of the media centers, because then you put a cost factor on the use of the

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 45 -

LEWITAN (Cont.): services, pricing them out of the market that they were intended to serve. And in many cases, changed the whole contextual[?]—

GIANCOLA: Margo, this wonderful experiment that started was starting to, I would say logically, drift towards the mainstream of American practice. In other words, all these—the fiscal accountability, all this kind of stuff that started coming later and becoming a much more serious issue, where just direct—The Council was directly passing onto you things that it was getting as messages about how an arts council should be run. And since the New York State Council on the Arts was the first in the United States, it felt that the changes that it was making were, you know, universal. It couldn't look to the NEA and say, "Well, how do you do this?," since it always considered the NEA a second. You know, it felt that it was leading. And I haven't put[?] my finger on it, but I must say that although I had a tremendously positive reaction to the constituency when I learned it, you know—As a newcomer, the only thing I thought was negative in the constituency when I arrived was it was all what the Council was doing to it. And I couldn't understand how people with that much independence, that much talent, that much ability in the arts could hang around and whine [laughter] so long about the Council. And my whole advice was, "You better get off this, because the Council is so busy trying to figure out what it's doing, it can't handle this. I mean, it can't handle your whining."

LYONS: Ok, Roger[sp?], and then...

MAN: John, Rob[?] has put two artifacts, historical artifacts on Formica[?] that suggest that the ground is moving under these debates that span seven years or eight years or whatever it is; that things are changing in such a way that maybe the deliberations of the Council, its policies and its grants—Could it be that these are only marginally significant to the nature of the field that we actually have? [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Certainly, the meetings of the Media Alliance that I forced my way into when I became program director—because I wasn't a trusted enough entity to be invited...

LYONS: No, you were still the enemy.

GIANCOLA: Yes, I [laughter] was—I mean, it was clear. I mean, I kind of barged in, you know, and said, "Alright, who's gonna throw me off?," you know? And I kind of got to stay. But the things I heard them talking about when they got down and talked about their problems certainly suggested that what you said was very, very true. They had problems that—There were so many frustrations facing the field at that point that they were galvanizing around the Council as the problem, because it was easier. You know what I mean? And part of the problem that was facing them had to do with equipment evolution, part of it had to do with the lack of communication among the so-called guideline categories. Distribution people weren't talking to exhibition people; exhibition people weren't dealing with production; production people were complaining about exhibition sources. I mean, it was an endless internal debate, too. A highly factional constituency. You know, sort of like Israel if it ever got peace, you

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 46 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): know what I mean? And it didn't have a neighbor or something threatening it from outside. You'd see this highly factional nation, you know?

LYONS: Bob[?].

MAN: Well, in 1977, I joined Portable Channel. One mentioned[?] L-CETA[?] grants, by the way, that had such an impact on so many organizations, [inaudible voices] where suddenly, you could stop being a cab driver and be subsidized to run around with Portapaks. One of my models, one of the people I most admired—and to some degree, still do—is Jon Alpert, who is not here. And for a lot of reasons. He's probably out shooting somewhere in Vietnam or somewhere. John and Keiko[sp?] represented to me a curious blend, and to some extent, in New York documentary, certainly[?], a kind of foreshadowing of the kind of issues that you're addressing, and the implications of government funding, to some degree. Apart from the issues of whether you liked their work or not, and whether you agreed with their politics, it seemed to me that they had developed a strategy which allowed them to do their work and push and make, and in fact, fund what they did. They got funding from the Council, but they also had earned income possibilities. And it was very much a—certainly, from my perspective—a guerrilla kind of operation, if you want to talk about impacting larger groups of people, or at least within their field. And so the reason I mention that is because when I came on the scene in Portable Channel, for example, and post-CETA, John, you became the programming person there. And when I inherited the organization, by default—"Here, someone take it."—the issue was how to measure yourself with earned income, in part as a relationship to the larger

MAN (Cont.): community of which you were a part. That was our particular lesson to learn. So we risked some things ourselves in acquiring the equipment and tools that allowed us to earn income and make that equipment available to the artists. NYSCA had no part in funding our acquisition of a broadcast camera or editing system. And although NYSCA gave us support, in fact[?]. I guess the point I'm trying to drive is, I think there's some truth to what you're saying, John, in terms of the whining of the constituency. And it's unfair to characterize it, perhaps, as whining, in some ways. But there's real conflict between the need of an organization created by NYCSA, we'll say, to perpetuate itself, and confuse that need with the need of an artist to make, create, distribute, and produce the work.

GIANCOLA: Yes. And don't forget, the Council also had artists coming to it privately and off the record saying, "We do not support the continued support of these organizations." You know what I mean?

MAN: Yeah.

GIANCOLA: The Council had that kind of ammunition, where they said, you know, "There's more bureaucracy being built than is necessary." Certainly, not Ralph and Sherry's case; there was *never* more bureaucracy built there than was necessary.

MILLER HOCKING: [inaudible]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 47 -

GIANCOLA: But there were organizations that had relatively sophisticated superstructures, like Media Study in Buffalo, which, you know, took on buying a hotel for their headquarters. And these superstructures were very simply out of hand, fiscally. And that was a matter of black and white accounting.

MAN: Kitchen.

GIANCOLA: The Kitchen was out of hand fiscally for a while. And...

MAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: I didn't say that. [laughter] I didn't say that. [inaudible voices]

LYONS: No, it can't be repeated. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: But it's interesting...

HOCKING: The Kitchen's still out of hand, physically.

GIANCOLA: Jon Alpert...

HOCKING: Fiscally.

GIANCOLA: ...at some point, said to himself, "If I had to limit myself to the Council's guidelines of what I should be doing, I couldn't do half of what I want to do." So he made contract with NBC. And he made several other contracts that caused his Council funding to go up. See, there's the irony and the proof of the pudding. The Council felt secure, you know, staying 15% of his budget by raising to fifteen, whatever it had to be, because they knew they were never going over a percentage. And he started to become one of the models of how it should be done. You see? Now, not everybody is a Jon Alpert, not everybody wants to go to Cambodia on salary. You know, he just happened to really want to do that, personally, so it worked. But I don't want to present this as black and white, because as a program director, I lived in the pressure of it. I did not treat it as black and white. And I recommended to the Council that all existing funding patterns remain completely intact and at present levels, before any discussions could take place. And I succeeded. That is to say, there were no further cuts. And the Media Program, after two years or so, realized that under my tenure, that the previous practice was going to stop, and that there was going to be no *Dance in America*. You know, because I convinced the Council that arts programming for television would be a new budget item. It would not affect existing budget. It would have to involve recognized video artists. You know, in other words, it got tied into the field and became an additional two-fifty-thousand for the field, indirectly. And that was my success on behalf of the field, that the Council calmed down. But what I had to do was I had to beef up things like Paik exhibition at Whitney, MoMA's circulating video collection. I mean, I— [DVD WILL NOT PLAY BEYOND THIS POINT; end of DVD three of six]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 48 -

LEWITAN: You know? The whole idea of incorporating the not for profit in order to be tax exempt was probably the wrong model, as a point of departure.

MAN: There's another nameless funding model, and that [inaudible]...

LYONS[?]: These are big issues.

MAN: ...film/video analogy one of you actually obliquely made it earlier, that in the early days, the New American Cinema, [inaudible] visionary film had everybody thinking about structuralism [inaudible] lyrical cinema, video, Brakhage being the model and so forth. But there's an interesting economic analogy that might be destructive, and it's one possibly being practiced by NYSCA as we speak. And that is to think that film projects, filmmakers lead a project life, after all. You know, there's kind of tradition, there's an ethic, there's a subculture of project and funding that doesn't seem to hold up in the video community. Do you think that's a danger for bureaucrats, for people that administrate funds to distribute to artists, to think that film artists have an analogous existence to video artists, and that their projects, therefore, should be held accountable in analogous terms?

GIANCOLA: Let me understand you correctly. In the first place, I would say that individual video artists do have the same project orientation.

MAN: Project life. [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Project life.

SCHNEIDER: [inaudible] institutions.

GIANCOLA: They do, yeah.

SCHNEIDER: But the, like, support institutions don't. They're more process oriented.

GIANCOLA: They're process oriented. But the individual funded projects... I think you're referring to the fact that somewhat, that the programs have merged.

MAN: That's true, too, but whether or not that's a problem, we don't know.

GIANCOLA: Well, I think in the individual artist funding, you'll find that won't be a problem because the project orientation of video artists and the project orientation of independent filmmakers has stronger parallels, in terms of time and what money will buy you. Like, the film program doesn't expect to see the film at the end of the funding cycle, and the video program doesn't expect to see the installation at the end of the funding cycle. They expect to contribute to what might be a two-, three-year process. And that's still being practiced by the Council.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 49 -

MAN: So you don't think that there's a difference, really, in the culture of video making and [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Well, not in that regard. No. And in the organizations, it's also a parallel, because Visual Studies is funded to do video publication, you know, that year. Woe be unto Visual Studies if it doesn't do video publication. So there's a totally different attitude toward organizations than there is toward artists.

LEWITAN: But I do think that something did happen. Yeah, I'm sure that it's absolute—

GIANCOLA: [inaudible; laughter] Something's definitely happening. We don't know what it is.

LEWITAN: Absolutely accurate [inaudible] that individual artists came to you complaining about individual arts organizations. And therefore, that to that extent, there was a certain degree of adversarialness within the community before it got picked up and run with by the various funding sources. But I think that at the point that there seemed to be a large distinction made between the support organizations and the producing organizations, and the distribution organizations and the individual artists who intersected with those organizations or participated within them, when that dichotomy became formalized, the nature of the work shifted. And I think that's what we haven't looked at, really, with any... Two things happened with that[?] workshop programs ceased to be funded. And when workshops disappeared from the

LEWITAN (Cont.): guidelines, the interaction of individuals in a set of circumstances, and the new people coming up in the field, and artists from other mediums experimenting in fields that were not their own—all of that energy and support structure shifted a great deal. And you get into a project oriented beginning, middle, and end, as opposed to a process oriented...

GIANCOLA[?]: Well, without the...

LEWITAN: ...way of working in the world. And the kids of things that Shirley was doing in Video Tepee ceased to be happening across the board with quite the energy that they were happening. And I think that that was a loss, in terms of experimentation [inaudible]

LYONS: Well, but it's also part of an evolutionary process.

GIANCOLA: Right.

LYONS: The question you could ask back is, how sensitive were we, collectively as a community, to establish some kind of ongoing overview of the development of the field?

GIANCOLA: That's it.

LEWITAN: No, I don't think it is, because I think that's probably naïve, in terms of what your resources are. You know, you have to have resources in order to do something.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 50 -

LYONS: No, but Margo, I think it impacts back on what the thinking of any of the funding agencies has been towards the field. You identified the loss of the workshop structure as a fundable category. Well, that was as much the responsibility of the field as it was the funding agency, right? Because the field was self-determining priorities, right? And it sort of let go of components that would help to articulate that field. But we've had a minimal thread holding onto the support of video criticism for— A whole 'nother category we haven't discussed is the question of how a literature has been built in the field, which is one thing that needs to be there to orient any subsequent generation entering that field, right? What educational commitments were being made? Not to just serve that first generation community moving forward through their own careerist development, but what was being done for people to enter the field.

LEWITAN: But you see, I don't believe for one moment that the field defined the change in the support structures. Because we were trying, in our organization, to continue that workshop structure for artists. I mean, you know, it was not school oriented, though we had that component at one point. We had workshops in video and in film long beyond our resources to support them. And because we finally ended up losing so much money doing them, we had to stop.

GIANCOLA: Yes, but Margo, not...

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 51 -

LEWITAN: So I don't believe for — And the whole community access movement which existed in the beginning, which lost support very early on from funding sources, caused a redefinition to happen. So the idea that the Council and other funding sources have historically been reactive, which is, I think, a myth that they tend to perpetuate, is in fact mythological. I think they've been setting the agenda, in a way that was inappropriate and we shouldn't have let them do, but they did, in fact set it.

GIANCOLA: They've been reactive, but to more forces than the constituency, is the point that I tried to introduce earlier. They've been reactive to the constituency and to *their* funders, the people who fund them.

SCHNEIDER: The state legislature?

GIANCOLA: Yes. They're trying to be sensitive to both. They live between those two. A program director, just a program director, lives between the constituency and the Council itself. You know? And the media center lives between the artist and the Council. I mean, it goes all the way down the chain. The Council lives between the legislature and the constituency, and it tries to serve both. And the number of media centers who touch base with the artist through workshop was also a finite number when they cut workshop. Ralph and Sherry, for example, don't touch base through the artist through workshop. I'm correct, right? The artists come to...

HOCKING: We used to do occasional workshops...

GIANCOLA: You do an orientation.

HOCKING: We come to Mesa[?] to do a workshop for them[?].

GIANCOLA: Yeah. But you're doing orientation.

HOCKING: Somebody had to straighten them out. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: But everything is operational there, right? I mean, the artists operate there. And you've already given them a little orientation to operation.

HOCKING: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: But the people who used the workshop as their contact base with the artist got hurt badly when workshop funding was cut.

HOCKING: But the workshop is nothing but an educational process. I mean, that process has been picked up enormously, all over the country now, through other educational institutions.

GIANCOLA[?]: [over Hocking] And that's all come back.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 52 -

LEWITAN: But then you're stuck having to go through a university system. And what these...

GIANCOLA[?]: Well, NYSCA[?].

LEWITAN: What these resources were was allowing access to a non-university based population, which I think was an enormous loss [inaudible]

HOCKING: [over Lewitan] I'm constantly getting fliers from all kinds of organizations that want me to come to some workshop. And it seems to me they're not all universities. And even universities do run them, and you don't have to take their whole curriculum, you can simply go in and take the workshop.

LEWITAN: No, it is quite different from being able to walk in off the street or gearing to people who are working in a different field and, say, come in and [inaudible]

LYONS: [over Lewitan] Well, also, Margo, in another pattern— And I don't want to overstate this, but to some degree, other components begin to enter, right? Cable, right? The appearance of media programs within the university system. There are things replacing things, ok? But it's not just simply a question of what our charge might have been, you know, fifteen to twenty years ago, and other things are not going to happen to readjust a pattern of activity. And if anything, I would like to get off the Council, from this moment forward, because I think there

LYONS (Cont.): are a series of other issues, alright? Because no matter what anybody has described, there still is the vestige of video in our society. Right? It's still there. It's different, it's changing, there are new implications as the technology has moved forward. If anything, I would say if we wanted to be noble about that, we could say many of our early expectations, ok?— And I'll even through in the Council, as my last reference to the Council, because recently the Council gave us what we were screaming for. And that was our major funding in general operating support, if we met certain criteria of performance. Ok? And now most of the organizations that exist as viable organizations in their minds receive general operating support. That's a big chunk of money that we can move internally to satisfy, ok? So you could say somewhere along the line, through all the curious ins and outs of things, somebody was listening. Right? Because I entered this field where that's all everybody wanted. Give us the money and let us self-determine the application of it, and we'll be accountable for the expenditure of it. Right? So there's a vestige of that, certainly, within the State Council on the Arts, in part with NEA, even in part with the MacArthur Foundation. What I'd like to do at this time is kind of shift and maybe do some future speak.

GIANCOLA: Could I just add one thing? Just one tiny thing. And that is— You gave me the idea; it's the last time we'll use the word Council. But it well may be the case that the Council is finished with its period of being reactive to the constituency and reactive to the legislature. It may be the case now that it has learned enough about its relation to both that it's becoming an institution that is proactive toward both of those entities. In other words, it may actually be reaching the legislature with its ideas at this point, as well as reaching the constituency with its

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 53 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): ideas. You have to understand, for the Council, no matter how it looks from the outside, that is a maturation process; to not be an institution that depends on outside information for its very existence, but one that aggressively goes after both sides with its ideas. That may be a little hard to get used to, it may seem a little colder; but it may be the case that the Council is maturing as an institution only very recently, in that regard, that it's becoming institutionally sound, highly regulatory in its practices, you know, more or less repeating itself rather than reinventing the wheel every year. I'm not sure. I'm out of touch. But it could be the case that some very good things are happening, and that it's going to multi-year support and it's going to more hands off the constituency, you know, in the long run. And maybe the Council has solved the riddle of the Media Program for itself, finally, by putting it with film and then closing the issue.

LYONS: Ok. If the acned child has finally gotten a job, [laughter] ok?...

MAN: Part-time.

MILLER HOCKING: As a filmmaker. [laughter]

LYONS: [laughs] We have to go through part-time as the next phase of this discussion?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: four of six DVDs, to a break point

- 54 -

GIANCOLA: I honestly think that after the Paik thing at the Whitney and a few other things, I think the acned child thing got replaced by sort of a twenty-one-year-old with a first job. I think the Council changed during the time it[?] was there, to actually started to see it as a viable art form. Which was nice. I'm sorry.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, but what about the merger of the film and video panel, and possible divorce? Even though we're not sure if they're married. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: I'll tell you, that one is way over my head, because I'm so out of touch with it that I would probably misrepresent it. But I think that if the Media Alliance stays in close and is willing to do a little political work, it might be able to have an effect on that future, too. Respectable political work, not whining. I mean, the kind that everybody does when they want to survive, everybody has a right to. Even the Council will recognize that the Alliance has a right to try and ensure the future of its programs, if they do it the right way.

LYONS: Go ahead.

MAN: Before you get to the future, we're going to flip tapes again.

LYONS: Ok, can we have a five-minute break, and stretch and...

MAN: Ok. No more than five minutes.

LYONS: No more than five minutes, ok. John, are we getting there?

GIANCOLA: I think so, yeah. [inaudible voices over each other; end of DVD four of six]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 1 -

[color bars; fades up from black]

GIANCOLA: —societies, and maybe to look art that as a larger issue. And at the risk of sounding like what I am, an academic, I'd like to look at it this way for a few minutes. I suspect at this point in my own reflections that the kind of community that I experienced personally in the seventies because of the affiliations I made, and the kind of community that the media arts, loosely speaking, managed to cull together for a long time, I suspect that we have witnessed, between '75 and the present, a real eclipse of that. In other words, we can talk now about the media arts existing less in "community,"

quote/unquote, than it did at one time. And we can put many of the changes we've been talking about as a subset of that general description, whether it's rapport with the Council, dialog with the Council, whatever. All these attributes of community, all these things that are part of community have passed away. And I choose to look at that experimentally, like most academicians choose to look at something, until they can prove it or disprove it, right? I choose to look at that, hypothetically anyway, as maybe the field realigning itself with what's happening to the larger culture. I'll give you an example. Video artists are personal friends of mine. And I've noticed over the years how much more they operate alone than they used to. That is, alone without a media center to call home, alone without a bunch of other artists coming over and bringing their tapes--you know, all these symptoms. How much they've been driven into their nuclear family, for example, or significant other. How many of them have managed to get even small shacks

GIANCOLA (Cont.): in the country, no matter how humble, that they can get away to, out of New York City, on the weekend. Again, in parallel to the mainstream culture. And I choose, hypothetically, not to look at that as negative change. In other words, I choose to look at that as an unorganized form of the media arts community aligning itself with the larger trends of the culture.

By the same token, I choose to look at the influence of corporate models on media centers the same way. In other words, that they have become increasingly sophisticated in their bookkeeping and accounting structures; that they have sought alternative funding, or what have you; or that they have packed it in. You know, I mean, Zanesville style.

SCHNEIDER[?]: Lanesville.

GIANCOLA: Lanesville, right. Where does the Z come from? Somewhere

HOCKING[?]: Ohio. [laughter] Ohio.

GIANCOLA: That there was a kind of, you know, meeting point with where everything was going, where they turned back. Or Mary MacArthur's famous words, you know, even most recently, was, "Well, you know, we can pack it in. I mean, we can include that category. That's an option. We can say no to the way things are going, and let somebody

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 2 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): discover our movement fifty years from now and revive us." You know, get enough stuff on tape and leave it around, and somebody'll find it and say, "Gosh! Look at that twentieth century stuff. [laughter] Let's see if we can get that going again." Right?

SCHNEIDER[?]: Funding for archival [inaudible; laughter]

GIANCOLA: But that hasn't been the decision; that by and large, the decision, however made individually, has been that this field is becoming more like— For better or for worse, the NEA and the Council are going to permute. You know? It would be a mistake at this juncture to strategize in terms of personalities in either one of those institutions. Those personalities will come and go. You know, yeah, they will have an effect, but they'll come and go. Jesse Helms will have an effect on the NEA. But Jesse Helms— It's nothing new, government censorship of the art. I mean, how much has been going on that the NEA, without Jesse Helmses, you know, in terms of what's good and what isn't? It's been going on for a while. And I don't know, I think I'd just like to float that there. You know, float the hypothesis, anyway. Float it into the room, that what we're talking about is, we're talking about change and we're talking about reaction and proaction. We're talking about people whose style it is to react to change, and that's how they grow; and people who more instinctively just adapt unquestionably. I think the video artist's life has become a significantly lonelier journey than it was in the first part of the GIANCOLA (Cont.): seventies. I think they are finding their contact with humanity in different ways than they used to. I think the media arts center is taking the corporate model much more seriously than it ever had to before, or ever wanted to before, whether it's visual studies or what have you. And I'll finish what I'm saying with a quote from Jacques Ellul. The French sociologist said a very interesting thing about technological societies. He said they're dominated, essentially, by technique. That everybody in this room and everybody everywhere else markets one thing in our kind of society, and it's that they have a way of doing it. And they have a way of doing it that they honestly believe is better than anybody else's. And that's the ultimate thing you have to market in a society where technique is raised to a kind of godly level, you know. And he said whenever you have competing techniques—and he called this his theory of the best way—there actually arises a kind of best way to do things. And this is murderous because it kills so many alternative ways off. And he was indirectly referring to CBS, when it comes to television. That this huge monster, call it what you will, so many alternative models that set out to be the opposite of CBS go on a kind of unconscious drift. Witness the public access television movement, which was to be un-CBS, if anything was. And now you see public access turning into something that actually resembles early Public Television, while Public Television resembles CBS. And there is this drift in our culture, and there is this kind of unconscious belief in viable models, even if we don't like them. And there are dominant and prevailing ways to do things. So I think how we're out of phase a little bit is, I think we're still asking serious questions about what it means to be

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 3 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): serious about new culture, and yet have to parallel existing culture so much to survive. What does it mean to seriously, philosophically represent alternative culture—which I don't think we've lost—but at the same time, be in the schizy position of having to act so much like mainstream culture to get that point across? I think there's been a real shift in that direction. I think artists want to know a lot more about their financial base than they used to want to know earlier. You know, how they're going to make it. At least that's what I see in young people today. They're more concerned with seeing to it. I think middleclass artists from the sixties are asking serious questions about being sixty-five years old and how they're going to live. I think right across the board, there's all this reconsidering. Because as Rorschach said, the sociologist, economics has become American culture. There is no American culture apart from economics. And I don't care whether you're alternative video or you're alternative hamburger distribution, I think you pay your dues to that model, or you know you don't survive, Council notwithstanding. Council's neither here nor there on this. The Council's trying to pay its dues to that model and take its constituents along. And I think the election of Reagan and the election of Bush—I mean, I think it's all double confirmation that this is, in fact, the way we're going. Hoover said the business of America is business. And I think alternative experiments are learning that they have some peace to make with that model. And there's no general guideline and no general rule. I don't know, does that make any sense? Is that *really* depressing? I mean—

MAN: Social Darwinism.

GIANCOLA: Well...

MAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: You know what's really weird? Just at the point where I think liberals from the sixties are at the height of their disgust with American government, right?, and the capitalist system, they see communists kind of throwing in the towel, globally. You know, a weird kind of— And they want all these products, and they want consumer goods. And you say to yourself— You know, nations are literally dumping their models and making peace with the international economic system in new ways. And I'm wondering myself what's going on. I'm not quite sure. But there seems to be a dominant international economic system that countries that were formerly outside it are changing their minds about being in it. And I can't explain why it's happening, but I know that the Soviets are making a very strong effort now, behind the scenes, to be inside the so-called seventy-six nation economic regulatory system that governs capitalism. And that system is still saying, "No, you can't come in yet. You can't come in until your country looks more like ours economically," you know?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 4 -

MAN: It's time for Ralph to hold up the camcorder again and say, "What is this[?]?"  
[laughs]

HOCKING: It might be a Japanese camcorder. [laughter]

MAN: It's gotta be[?]. Because they're there to[?] answer the question, you know?

GIANCOLA: Tell me the hypothesis. Tell me how the hypothesis floats. Because we're having more camcorder revolution reported by Ted Koppel now that we can report in New York State. Ted Koppel goes on and makes a program—that doesn't belong to ABC, by the way, if you notice the end credit; it belongs to Ted Koppel. He's formed his own communication company. And the things he makes in cooperation with ABC are his property. That's in his new contract. And he made television revolution in a box. And it was all about what the camcorder has done politically around the world to change world politics. Hell, we used to sit around and B.S. about that, as our private conversational domain. Because we—

LYONS: John, that's the point I was trying to make before. Let's leave your hypothesis floating, [laughter] ok? Let's try to get to—

GIANCOLA: Until it's proven, we have to.

MAN: [inaudible]

LYONS: Sure. But let me finish this. Let me finish this statement, and then I'll turn it over to anyone who so chooses, of this crew. What's the flip side? Ok? How do we look back on history and say in spite of the issue of personal biography, attachment, have certain things come more to the fore, as they were being discussed earlier, i.e., camcorder, even more economical systems than we ever thought possible, in the hands of many, many more people, alright?, functioning out of their living rooms, let along media centers. Are there realignments? Are there reevaluations? Are we really, aside from the more depressing personal experiences up to this point, are we further along than we might think we are?

GIANCOLA: Are we out of phase with how far, how much we've arrived?

LYONS: Right..

MAN: Yeah. It seems to me, John, the way you're talking about it, as sort of like being in phase, in synch, out of synch with a kind of dominant mode that you feel to be evolving, it just seems— You know, it's one of those really monolithic, simpler kind of segmenters[?]. I mean, ultimately, there are multiple histories that go on. You know, if you sort of go along with the idea: Ok, we're in a Republican era, the best business is

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 5 -

MAN (Cont.): business, so therefore, we should do it like business; and you know, that the arts just finally has to kind of react to whatever that structure is—it just seems ludicrous to me. I mean, I understand why trickle down happens and attitudes sort of get set up. But to suggest that that's alright, I mean, we can— Let's put the squeeze on artists, let's put the squeeze on education. Let's question the whole issue of public education. Let's question— You know, there are certain things, certain kinds of values within the culture. And something that I think is really hard to address, which has something to do with value, about how we value art that's made, how the culture understands its own artistic traditions, how that fits into American history. The Council and what it means, how it communicates. On some level, it's about paying bills. It's also on a level of presence on television, presence in the big museums. And some sense of something that we value that we couldn't— It's that question of value and how we make— what is it that makes it legitimate? Et cetera. We keep falling back on these models that, you know, are just straight business. It's just another version of technicalness. It's like looking at [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Please don't accept what I said as a sympathetic statement with that dynamic. In other words, I was trying to lay out a phenomenon that I think, as a phenomenon, naturally divides the field. In other words, what happens is that in the field, there are people who wish to be more a part of that phenomenon, so they have to adapt closer to it. And as Woody Vasulka once said to me, "The further culture gets away from GIANCOLA (Cont.): the original ideals of this field"—and let's say it certainly has, in many ways—"the more the alternative model goes further underground. I mean, there's a double dynamic. Some people just go farther out than they ever were, with their activity; and some people try to do more parallels to the changes that are happening in the mainstream. But don't forget, the sixties was a time when the mainstream was being forced to entertain a lot of confrontational ideas from the counterculture. And all I'm suggesting is that dialog ended, the Council being a manifestation of an end to that dialog. You know, that the dialog between the counterculture and the mainstream ended. The mainstream decided it had heard enough. And that puts the counterculture either closer in or farther out, by definition—take your choice—because the dialog's been cut off. So you're either counterculture without the dialog, or you're counterculture with a new dialog that you're trying to set up. I mean, that's my hypothesis, that's all. I wasn't trying to put a value on it.

MAN: Maybe one of the problems was in naming the counterculture counterculture. I don't think we deal with literature as calling it counterculture or its *Reader's Digest, Life Magazine* or whatever popular kind of forms exist. We've got traditions there. That's what I'm referring back to. I mean, there's a kind of simplification of what media is and what it represents, and what the contributions of the artists involved have been.

GIANCOLA: I think you're right.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 6 -

MAN: Kind of like—I mean, that term always put it into a really funny place.

[inaudible]

GIANCOLA: I think simplifications serve one kind of purpose only, and they don't serve many purposes at all. And that's probably what I just did. I agree.

LYONS: That's why I wanted to leave it floating.

GIANCOLA: Yeah. [laughter] I wanted to float it as an image, not as a solution.

LEWITAN: [laughs] I think that part of what Pier's[sp?] raising is that tendency to look at media, and especially to video, and within video, to video art, as an area that had to be viewed independently because it was so new; as opposed to being simply another artform that was being practiced and developed. I think the singling out of a form, in the same way that you would single out the Wooster Group or Mabu Mines or one of the collective experimental theater companies from other theater practicing— The differences are less significant than the similarities. And that if we look at the similarities in terms of what is involved in practicing in literature, in theater, in video, in music, in the arts, what is involved, and how has that practice shifted, and what is needed in order to ensure that the arts continue to flourish?, we come up with more usable ways of thinking about the universe than if we try to single it out and say, "This has shifted because this was new LEWITAN (Cont.): and—" Because I don't think the pressures that are brought to bear on the medium are that different from the pressures that are brought to bear on all of the artforms as they are being practiced right now.

GIANCOLA[?]: I don't[?] agree with that.

MAN: And I guess people, in the same way[?], why wouldn't it be fair to say that to a certain extent, the linkage that was made in the early video days by a lot of these people here between video and social change and just rapid experimentation with the technology and so forth occurred because the technology came on the scene at that point in time in history. And what the, you know, revolution for questioning or whatever throughout the entire society. And it's an interesting parallel, what the comparison would be with personal computers, which came on the scene at a very different time in history. And nobody ever talks about personal computers as being a technology that's going to revolutionize writing or reporting or anything [inaudible]...

GIANCOLA[?]: Nobody does?

MAN: ...developed in a way that is ultimately going to change society. [inaudible]...

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 7 -

GIANCOLA: Oh, I think they do. [inaudible voices over each other] I would disagree with that.

MAN: ...in that same direction.

GIANCOLA: Well...

LEWITAN: I think that they do. And I think, in fact, the impact of the computer on the structure of language is something that people—I mean, the way one thinks about writing has shifted from the way in which one actually manipulates words and sentences and paragraphs, [laughs] which one couldn't do before.

MAN: Yeah, but it might be[?] postmodernism, as opposed to revolutionary television.

GIANCOLA: Well...

LEWITAN: Well... And you said it. I got lost there. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: See, what Nathan said about the camcorder and the media arts center today, any given media arts center could decide that one priority that it never had before but now it does have, is to try and outreach to everybody who owns one of those

GIANCOLA (Cont.): camcorders. So the issue is not an equipment issue anymore, it's a— You know, the public may have solved that. And to try a workshop approach or a seminar approach involving thirty people in a given city who've been using camcorders, with some enthusiasm but with no club to belong to, right? And some of the original ideas of that media center, those leaders might want to try and inculcate into some of those new camcorder users, some of the ideas. I mean, access ideas. If Ira wanted to go back into the business of working with people who were shooting media on their own, he wouldn't need to buy the equipment to do it now. He'd have to do an outreach to the people [inaudible voice] who are shooting media on their own.

MAN: Yeah, I think my point was that the association—I mean, the social change or drawing art from the masses or whatever, it's not that that was wrong, but that that's only one of the many possible aspects of video, of use of video, which was focused on at that particular time, because of the particular time that video came on the scene.

HOCKING: The future of television, you want to hear it? [laughter]

LYONS: Are you giving us a choice, Ralph?

HOCKING: Are you ready?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 8 -

LYONS: Ok. Sure.

HOCKING: It's interesting. I mean, all of the things that—I mean, there's a lot of shit swimming around in my head at the moment about the things that we've been talking about. And much of it has to do with the idea that—I think that video art is video art, and video isn't video art. And video as video is many video things. And if we're talking about the ideas of making art with video, we're talking about the concepts of visual art. And this is *all* I'm going to talk about. I'm not gonna get anywhere near theater and things like that, because I don't know that much about it. But I believe it's different than video art. And I'm just gonna be specific about what I think about what's happening and what I think is in the immediate future for what we're doing as video artists. It's the same thing that's always been. If a person is going to be a visual artist, they're just gonna do it. If they get supported, fine; if they don't get supported, they'll do it. And now that is coming to the point of video artists. They'll do it. They'll put something together because of the fact that these pencils and these cheap crayons are available now, and you can do things like that. You can get the computer, the personal computer. There's a million on the market. That's an *amazing* machine. You can set this up in your house. It's gonna cost you less than a car. For less than the cost of a car, you can set up your own system. If you want to make visual art, all you've got to do is put it together. Alright? That puts me out of business, as far as what I do know. And I think that's what I've been striving for so many years. I used to threaten Pier[?] all the time. I said, "Maybe next year we're not HOCKING (Cont.): gonna be here. Maybe we won't be needed. Maybe it'll all be over with. Maybe we can do something else. I'm tired of this shit; let's do something else." [laughter] I used to say that to Minkowski. Minkowski used to say, "All you gotta do is just not take the money, Ralph." [laughter] He's right [inaudible]. My position on this is that I think it's coming to a point where people who want to make visual art with this tool, or with anything else, will find a way to do it. They've always done it this way. And it's not entirely a romantic position. I always think—have always thought that, and do think now—that people who make visual art are intent upon what they do. And they're absolutely going against the grain of society, and they don't want anything from society. Except to change it. And that's their intention. That's their intention. Their intention is not to buy into the damn social structure. Their intention is to irritate it, is to push it around. And if you have to become part of it, if you have to form the corporations to become part of the social structure, the hell with it. Don't do it. Forming a corporation gets you somewhere. And it's not a threat. And we did it. We formed a corporation, and that got us NEA money. And I never think about it. I mean, the board of our corporation is Sherry, myself, her ex-boyfriend, and my ex-wife. [laughter] We never have any meetings. [laughter] So you don't have to buy into the structure.

MILLER HOCKING: Yeah, only once. [laughter]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 9 -

HOCKING: You don't have to buy into the structure of the culture, you can simply ignore it. Get into it as far as you have to get in, and then grab the dough and do something else. You know, lie a lot or something like that. But I don't think there's any problems with any of this. I think that there's going to be a lot of this around in all kinds of forms, the way there are Eberhard Fabers lying around on the table. And that's the way industries about[?]. And what's really nice about it, to me, is that it's starting to become humanized. It's out of the hands of the so-called professionals. And that's the major thing that's happened in the last few years, and that's what started with this. [inaudible] revolution took place. And that revolution's over with.

LYONS: There's a question. Sure.

WOMAN: I come from Ithaca. We just went through refranchising and a re-upgrading of all our studio equipment. It was interesting hearing you talk about the Europeans [inaudible] Americans want all this— everything has to be the latest technology, because in the discussions, you know, my point of view was get good video, good audio, you know, no hum in the lines. Just basic plain vanilla, something to work from. And all the kids want, they wanted media[?], they want fancy graphics capabilities, things that flip pages around. And the fact that the tools that we work with are technological, of course, there's going to be always an improvement. And this like this lure of false gold that can distract you from what's the subject matter that you're going to cover. And you know, I WOMAN: don't think it's going to happen, but I wonder if some people aren't distracted by this too much. I mean, it's a nice thing to have, and it's wonderful to have 3.2[sp?] cameras. I mean, it's just fantastic to work with S-VHS instead of ten-year-old Portapaks, but...

GIANCOLA: But it may involve—

WOMAN: What are you doing with it, you know? I mean, that's the question[?].

GIANCOLA: It may involve buying into the system, to use Ralph's term, more than you need to, to do what you want to do. I mean, shackling yourself with tremendous equipment burden.

HOCKING: But why? Why does it cost you more to buy into the system than anything else you do? [Lewitan laughs]

GIANCOLA: Why does it what?

HOCKING: Why does it cost you more to buy into the system in video than in anything else you do?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 10 -

GIANCOLA: I don't understand.

LEWITAN: It means that you're in the system. You have to live in it anyway, what the hell difference does it make whether you're doing video or something else? I mean, basically, right?

HOCKING: Yeah.

MILLER HOCKING: Yeah.

GIANCOLA: Well, I think the point I was trying to make is that an access center can put the purchase of equipment ahead of what it's being used for. And technology people need to be reminded—Red Burns said technology is an idiot. I mean, it does what we tell it to do. And that's true. I mean, people forget that you can do a great deal on the equipment you have.

WOMAN: I mean, it's wonderful to get the new equipment, but I just... It worries me that people might get so distracted that the whole subject matter of what they're doing is playing with what you can do technically, and not...

HOCKING: But people always do that with equipment. You have to get the next stereo.  
WOMAN: Yeah, but technology [inaudible].

HOCKING: You have to get the next stereo set, [inaudible voices] you have to keep up with the neighbors, you have to buy the new toy that comes out. That takes the burden of responsibility of using it away. All you have to do is own it.

GIANCOLA: That's the point, yeah.

HOCKING: All you have to do is own it. All you have to do is just make it available for your neighbors for view. Many people deal with technology that way. They don't pay attention to what they can do with it.

GIANCOLA: There are access franchises—

HOCKING: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: Excuse me. There are access franchises in the United States where there's a common practice that's a total perversion of access philosophy. And that is that you pay no attention to community animation whatsoever. Ok? You do very, very little to animate the community to use the tool. But you constantly take the gross receipts you're entitled to from the cable company and upgrade your facility. And the higher tech the facility

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 11 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): gets, the less the community's interested in approaching it. And so they're using all their—

WOMAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: They're using all their revenues to get closer and closer to the broadcast model, in the way they look.

WOMAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: And they don't care who uses it, what kind of lousy shows are on it. You know how much lousy access there is in the United States? I mean, you wouldn't watch it, regardless of your taste or your age. And...

MAN: That's what they say about[?] video art. [laughter; inaudible] the local access channel here, cable, has gone to an LO[?]. It is now a TV station.

GIANCOLA: It's an LO, not even an access.

MAN: Right.

HOCKING: What's an LO? [inaudible voices over each other]

MAN: No, GRC.

GIANCOLA: The cable company runs one channel in its own name, and it can do anything it wants with it. [inaudible voice] Many cable companies like to combine the two. It gives them much more control. But even in places where the franchise protects the citizen and there's a real cable advisory board, I've seen the cable advisory board vote in new technology with this year's half-million dollars in revenue for the cable company, without ever discussing the quality of the program, the outreach to the community. They never even raise the issue. They are in what I described as Elull's "best way." They're going for the best way. The model doesn't apply, but they're still going for it. It's the CBS model; that people don't know what else to do except look more and more like a CBS, that it's an improvement. And that's unfortunate.

HOCKING: That's it. We're done.

LYONS: No, I don't think so. [laughter] No. No, Chris[sp?], I think essentially, I was obviously reflecting on what you were saying in terms of the existence photography and all the parallels in what you were describing, in relation to technology and equipment and— you know, are essentially there, and we're still at the underlying problem of what

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 12 -

LYONS (Cont.): are people going to do with the tools, you know, either personally, communally, effectively? Because it seems to me that we're closer than we ever have been before to some of the ideas that were discussed in the early seventies. You know, democratize media, right? That it wasn't so much the issue of computer [inaudible], but desktop publishing. That we are generating a series of mechanisms that we can involve ourselves with at a highly personal nature, ok? Which is— Or in terms of certain kinds of public extensions, alright? Which is still the same polarity that we're dealing with in discussing the advent, you know, of video as a counter to commercial television. The question is whether or not one even needs any structures at all. I would think probably what we would need would be some identified access, but not access in terms of tools as much as access in terms of work. Right? And some of the structures that we've fought for are already in enough transition so that they don't look like anything one wanted them to be. Ok? Public access, right? Distribution mechanism. Right? My God, you know, if VCRs were there at the very beginning, how would that have affected our conversations about distribution? I mean, Ralph used to go on about, you know, "Come by and see the tapes." Ok? There was no sense of dissemination. Right? I think one of the arguments that Ralph held to quite superbly was his argument against the issue of broadcast. Everybody wanted their tapes broadcast, and Ralph wanted to send people around with their tapes to show them to people. Ok? Other mechanisms. You know, it seems to me that what we're losing sight of—and I know it's been a long day, ok? Because I'm trying LYONS (Cont.): to get to the prospects of an upside of this conversation. Now, if you think that's futile, I can form[?] closure.

LEWITAN: Most people are saying that there is no problem. I mean, I don't have a sense that Ralph or Sherry or John feel that the loss of certain kinds of situations is, you know, indicative of a loss of the production of work of value. I think, as a matter of fact, most people that have expressed themselves have expressed themselves in a very up way. The only one who seems to have problems with this whole thing is me. And I have severe problems. [laughs] Because...

GIANCOLA: Does anybody have a Valium? [laughter]

LEWITAN: ...because I believe—I don't need a Valium, John.

GIANCOLA: You might be the only one who's not drugged on the panel. I mean, I don't know. [laughter] Maybe you're the only one who's not on antidepressants. There have been changes. [laughter] I'm sorry, I'm kidding.

LEWITAN: It's alright. No, I basically feel very strongly that art cannot survive in isolation, and that distribution into a VCR is not something to be aspired to or warm to or otherwise made to feel that it solves the problem. I think that where art has flourished

LEWITAN (Cont.): historically has been in situations where, for a variety of reasons,

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 13 -

some of which were totally accidental, of fact, really, communities of artists have come together. For example, New York City after World War II, you know, where there was this incredible migration from Europe, and from other parts of the country after that migration from Europe. And the arts have survived and thrived, and New York City was, until very recently, the arts capital of the world. I think that it probably isn't anymore, and certainly won't— You know, I mean, it's impossible to live there. There's no place to live, without having great sums of money. I think the inadequacy of an ability to live on little money—not because you've changed your value system, but because there's no place to put your head—changes the environment in which work is being created and pursued. And I think that rather than just saying, "Well, this is how it's changed," what I was kind of hoping would come out of an event like today, or more events like this, is strategies to continue, I guess, for lack of a better word, a community of work that could be shared. I mean, one of the things— we were here today to talk about the sixties and seventies. And an awful lot of the work that we were doing that I found the most interesting happened in the eighties, which is why I really didn't get involved in it that much. But it seems to me that everything that I have developed as an individual working in the arts as a producer of work, as opposed to as a service, you know, for somebody else's work, has come from the sharing of work and sharing of ideas. Because I am basically coming out of collaborative form, and I never did work in isolation. A theater artist really can't. So it's not that I'm down, but I would like us to think about what it is LEWITAN (Cont.): that we need, defining what it is that that will allow our work to flourish, and then develop a way and a strategy of doing it, as opposed to saying things have changed. You know. I mean, it's like New York City, you know? Things have changed. Things have changed. We had Ed Koch for twelve fucking years, right? And the world collapsed around— Literally, the infrastructure of the city collapsed. You know, every day you go down the street, another gas pipe explodes, spewing asbestos all over the city. Well, we finally got rid of him. You know? I mean, it seems to me that we can't just say, "Gee." We have to say, "What do we need?" And then we have to go about trying to find a way of getting it. And in that sense, yes, you're not going to a funding source and saying, you know, "Solve my problem." But by the same token, if what we need is more support for the arts, other than— You know, I'm too old to look for support. I mean, I figure after fifty, you can't be on your knees anymore. [laughter] You know, it's too hard to get up.

HOCKING[?]: Arthritis.

LEWITAN: Right. So you really have to find ways of solving your problem that don't involve putting your hand out. [laughter] I'm seriou—I was walking down the street with Ted Berger, who is the director of the New York Foundation for the Arts. We were going from one meeting to another meeting. And this guy asked for money. And I reached into my pocket and I gave him money. And Berger said, "*I never give those guys money.*"

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 14 -

LEWITAN (Cont.): And I said, "I always give them money. It's just a question of scale." [laughter] I don't feel any different, right? Because I'm trying to support the system.

SCHNEIDER[?]: Was it a media artist? [laughter]

LEWITAN: [laughs] Well, it could've been! Right? So to me, you know, if you work, and you're able to do it, and you feel that you've got what you need, then by all means, just continue doing it. And if, on the other side, you have this need for other things to be happening and they're not happening, I think we have to take the future in our hands, become proactive, and try to figure out how to make it work.

GIANCOLA: But we couldn't have predicted, from the point of view of, at least where I was in the late sixties, it would've been very, very hard, with my interest in the image, you know, my crude, young interest in the image on that video camera, I could not have predicted where— [tape problem] —interest in the image in the next twenty years has gone beyond anything that I could've projected as a sweep, you know, a kind of social sweep. I couldn't have projected an actor president. I couldn't have projected Kennedy's use of the TV medium turning into Reagan's use of it. I couldn't have predicted that Americans would become so guided by the image for their everyday decisions, you know? I mean, Nathan's point about the camcorders as a tangible everything we've ever wanted is coming. But the image itself, the philosophical issue, the issues that are harder GIANCOLA (Cont.): to analyze, the way in which the society has become eight times more in need of a media arts center than it was when they first...

LEWITAN: Exactly!

GIANCOLA: ...opened, that's what makes me lean toward what Margo's saying and say, I wonder if a certain vitality hasn't left the field, that it's not responding to this. You know what I mean? You question it. You say, I wonder if a certain vitality hasn't left the field, because it's not responding to these developments the way it used to respond to developments, you know?

MILLER HOCKING: Yeah. I think that one of the things that media centers provide, and did provide, and that we lose sight of very easily, especially in situations like this, doesn't have to do with fiscal policy. It doesn't even have to do with equipment. It has to do with a situation or an environment, a set of resources that someone can come to, and can contribute to. And I think that in a lot of ways, that's probably *the* most important thing that happens at the center, at our center. And I think that it's not a unique thing.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 15 -

LEWITAN: [over Miller Hocking] Right. It's certainly what happens at ours. And what you just raised, which is the whole issue of visual literacy— You know? I mean, when we got into the eighties and did that symposium on the intersection of word and image, what we were trying to do...

GIANCOLA: Is address what I'm talking about.

LEWITAN: ...is to address that, and to understand the ways in which television has become a consumer. I mean, the medium has consumed other mediums, without finding its own defining characteristic. And at the same time, then spewing out something which then purports to be one thing, and really is something else. And we haven't developed the skills to even know what it is that we're looking at. And we're in a culture that is no longer reading, but is watching the tube, and doesn't even understand the degree to which its thought is being influenced by the manipulation of those images. So the idea that, you know, there's not anything more to do, the media centers had their day—I mean, this is, to me, a very foreign idea.

GIANCOLA: I don't think anybody's said that, Margo. I mean, I don't think anybody said that—

LEWITAN: Well, there's a certain ease to which the triage thing which has happened—I mean, it is— In 1973, there were 225 off-off Broadway theaters in New York City. In 1989, there are ninety. Now, that means that something has shifted. I don't know the figures for the media centers, but I know there are fewer now than there were then. [inaudible voice] And the answer about quality is not it, because it's the foment that created the possibility for work.

MAN: Well, I think there's something—I mean, if you looked at the same statistics for the media ownership in the United States, for example, and then worldwide, of the networks, of the publishing companies, et cetera—I'm talking about information media, as well[?]—you find a similar statistic, in terms of— In your case, you're taking about reduction of vitality. In the case I'm pointing to, I'm talking about concentration of power and energy, as far as the audience is concerned. I don't know to what degree, as a person not in the arts directly, but as someone who works with artists—one, in particular—the concerns that you're addressing— Maybe what [inaudible] we can be blinded by, because of historical perspective to some degree, is the form, the center, as you're calling it[?], is vacant[?] today. So that we can get locked into older models of what a media center should be, needs to be today. I would agree with you, especially as a parent, that there is a critical need for centers, especially related to visual studies, the visual image, and visual literacy. But which need to be defined in some way and supported in some way that allow artists to participate. And if we're [inaudible] equipment need, and those artists who want MAN (Cont.): to work for broadcast get access to that, and if you want to get into start

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 16 -

and learn[?], if you've got kids shooting with these things, then we have to be looking at some— either supporting existing models— finding them first, supporting the existing models that are working, or creating new ones.

LEWITAN: I think we need to talk to— and try to figure out what, if anything, we need in order to make the work happen in a way that makes sense to us. But I use the word center because that's the word that— you know? I mean, it's not that one holds onto a particular structure, but there seems to be, in my experience, in any case, right now, a vacuum at the core of the interaction of artists [inaudible]

MAN: [inaudible]

HOCKING: [over Man] One of the things I'll say, with [inaudible] is that you had described the center before—let's call it New York City; that after the war there was a center. Because you physically had to be connected to it in some fashion. We're developing these— I mean, we're not developing them, these things are developing. Other kinds of attitudes toward that idea. I mean, you've got now ways of communicating that are very simple, that are fairly cheap. I can call people up on my computer, I can do all kinds of things. I can get information, I can schmooze, with the computer and with the video. It won't be very long until we have the image [inaudible]. We have it to a HOCKING (Cont.): certain extent now. To bring things together into a central position, I think, is probably not the way to even think about it.

WOMAN: That's right.

HOCKING: What we have to do is somehow [inaudible] that beautifully.

LEWITAN: There is a real difference between a teleconference and sitting in the room with somebody. There is a real difference in the energy of the interaction. I mean, the actual magnetic force that exists between two live bodies is different. I'm not saying that one is, you know— I'm not making a value judgment. It's different. And therefore, the end result of it is different.

GIANCOLA: But the definition of what it means to get together physically, ok?, and all the jet fuel that that implies, alright?, is changing. In other words, when we will, as people, select to engage in that atmosphere where we can feel the chemistry and all that kind of stuff, that's changing because of what Ralph just posited. In other words, we're going to have a different economy about when we get together, compared to how we used to feel about always getting together. And what ties it in for me is what you said. I guess I'm trying to tie up your implication, Margo, that perhaps we're not being as imaginative as we could be. Right? One. And another way to look at that and audit ourselves is that GIANCOLA (Cont.): we're very close to what Ralph just described. We're very close to

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 17 -

a merger between appliances that we tend to see as separate appliances right now—and that is, you know, the television, the computer and the telephone...

HOCKING: An iron and a washing machine[?]. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: Now, they're merging at such a speed, ok?, that the catch word in the industries that they touch— And think of the industries that those three appliances touch, just in terms of salaries alone, right? Those three industries, if you look into the heart of them, they have a catch phrase that they use at their conferences. You know, the telephone, the computer and the television are merging. Right? And each of those dominant industries talks about how central it is to that merger. And if you look up into those industries, they know that this is about a decade away, if the economy holds up. And if you listen to their conversations, they sound like the media arts community. See? Because they don't know which one of these giant industries is going to get squashed because it didn't maneuver fast enough. And AT&T says, "We've got the long lines. You ain't going nowhere without us." And IBM says, "We've got the tools that make people interactive with you guys. You're not going anywhere without us." And CBS says, "We've got Robert Redford. You're not gonna get off the *ground* without us, because you're gonna need stars to get this thing rolling." You know, so suddenly the whole entertainment field has been pulled into the communications field. And everybody's GIANCOLA (Cont.): asking— Well, so the dominant trend of '80 to '84 was for each of those three to brag and say, "We're gonna be the biggest in this." And the trend from '85 to '90 has been the opposite. It's been for the three of them to kind of make sure none of the three get left out. Suddenly they're collaborating more. You know what I mean? They're saying—

LYONS: Or buying one another out.

GIANCOLA: Or they're owning each other. I mean, they're falling under the umbrella of the other. But CBS, J. Walter Thompson is working with the projection now, as are all ad agencies, that within ten years, the American mass market, media market, could be choosing with 50% of its viewing time, rather than passive. Your point. And from a marketing point of view, that could represent ruination, if they're not choosing an I Can't Believe It's Not Butter commercial. And the question is, you know, PepsiCo steps in and says, "Well, we're contemplating a PepsiCo archive of American history that you can have on your home system free, like free television." All you have to do is get a Pepsi ad with every print ad. Or, you know, Pepsi'll cut in and remind you to use its products, as you study Lincoln. But Pepsi will arrange that archive. You will be dependent on Pepsi-Cola for the range of information that you can get, access. And so will the new home system, the new magic information system be analogous to commercial television? God forbid. And you know, our old foe is dissolving in front of our eyes. You know, in the GIANCOLA (Cont.): sixties, we were over and against the gatekeeper media. Now all

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 18 -

academicians know what gatekeeper media is. They discuss it freely, and how it should die. You know, it spread to universities, somewhat. And the three large industries are jockeying for how they're going to maintain their profit in the technological change. And I think I'm supporting Margo's point by saying, have we lost some vitality, in that we're not asking ourselves, a little bit, anyway, whether we have an organized involvement or a disorganized involvement in that future? I mean, that's fine. Either one's fine. You know, but should we be asking, or should we not be asking? You know, should there still be planning and strategy meetings? Or is that something that went out? Is there a movement? Or is it now just the people who are doing it? And what's the [inaudible]

LYONS: [over Giancola] Yeah, but it's still [inaudible].

LEWITAN: [over Giancola] The degree to which you—

LYONS: I still think you're all begging the issue, ok?

SCHNEIDER: Oh, yeah?

GIANCOLA: Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: Which issue?

LEWITAN: Begging which issue?

LYONS: If I use the analogy, if we trace the patterns of other mass media kinds of events in our society, if we even go back to print media, newspapers, ok?, we can acknowledge that they were the dominant form in human communications, the exchange of information—whatever end of it you wanna deal with. They went into a severe decline. Ok? More recently, they're in an ascendancy again. That doesn't mean the quality of journalism in our society's improved. Ok? And that's the point I'm trying to make about our relationship with any of these technologies. It still seems to me to be a question of our use and application of them, you know?, within a society. Now, if major corporations are going to be the providers of information—

GIANCOLA: We hope not.

LYONS: Right. Well, then it would seem to me that the second stage of our concerns might be in— you know, of reinvestment in trying to address the manipulative components of any media form, in how they can affect a society's ability to choose, understand, discern, interpret. Ok?

GIANCOLA: I follow.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 19 -

LYONS: Ok.

GIANCOLA: Ok. But what will change, what will be something new under the sun, is when among the things you can do with your home view screen—let's put a big one in the living room and private ones at each terminal, right?; the big one can be used for movies and stuff—is that you have this telephone book, like Nam June Paik's videotape, right? You have this telephone book of feature films, just for example, right? And each one of those feature films can be dumped on your hard visual disc, with two seconds of a long distance phone connection, and you can view it any time you want. The marketplace is saying, "What's going to happen to our present good gig of television delivered to people?" Right? "What gonna happen to our good gig, when people can make that many choices that don't involve advertising?" It's like a crisis for them, right?

LYONS: Well, don't leave out programming as an issue. Because the shift you're implying is that it will be a question of self-selection, as opposed to...

GIANCOLA: Preprogramming.

LYONS: ...preprogramming.

GIANCOLA: That'll be there. I used 50% as a gauge that's being tossed around in the industry, that the American public might actually opt for 50% of its preoccupation on the keypad not being preprogrammed junk. You know, like maybe—

MAN: Well, we heard [inaudible].

GIANCOLA: Well, they don't have the connection yet. They don't—

MAN: Yeah, but [inaudible]. It seems to me that all that is, is a better form of videotape. [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: [over Man] Well, it's a hell of a lot better when you're choosing it. And I guess my point boils down to the Video Data Bank in Chicago, however crude an establishment it may be, is operating on the premise that someday—you know, a la Gene Youngblood—Americans can choose to be wired to video art tapes for a small fee.

HOCKING: They will be. I mean, that'll happen.

GIANCOLA: And so you know, they're banking on that kind of a future.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 20 -

HOCKING: But yeah, [inaudible]. But that doesn't make anything change. I mean, we're gonna have the same [inaudible] options [inaudible voice] shift in the medium that we have in any medium.

SCHNEIDER[?]: Well, that's what's basically happening. Broadcast television is losing its market share. It's going down. But things available on cable television, like HBO and Cinemax, which are really the mass market movie programmers, are coming up. And new stations, new cable stations that are coming in are pretty much modeled after, Well, just provide more entertainment. There are very few new ones that are dealing with problem solving and ecology and some of the concerns that we're talking about here.

LEWITAN[?]: Which says something about—

MILLER HOCKING: Yeah, but those concerns may never be dominant concerns in our culture—or in any culture. I share your interest in those kinds of things, obviously. But I don't think—if you're looking at the whole society, if you're looking at any kind of culture, those issues may not be dominant concerns for 90% of the people in Rochester or Binghamton or Owego, or anywhere. They're not. They may never be. So the fact that you have access, or most of the people have access to the alternative, I think may be as far as you can take that.

LYONS[?]: Ok, so we're talking about narrowcasting.

MAN: I was just gonna say, the term narrowcasting is one—I mean, it's part of our problem is, we bounce back and forth. We want it all. And we're aware of the fact that it will happen in a number of ways all at once. But something I said yesterday is a model that's sort of like a humble model, but I think had a lot of richness to it. I mentioned CAPP's video festival that happened years ago, when that organization existed. It was a funding organization and then there was a festival of that year's winners.

GIANCOLA[?]: Distribution.

MAN: And it was distribution. The point is distribution. And the nature of that distribution was that it was—it showed the parallel complex histories of many different people, many different forms, all at once. And for numerous reasons, the era we're in, things have split off towards—become more like broadcast TV, or the museumization, and the fact that we have curators who are selecting work not across genres, but that actually have something relative to a particular point in art history that they want to deal with, or aligning it to that history[?]. So the whole potential of advocacy that, call it the video revolution, I always thought came out of, a lot of what interested me about it, suddenly was sort of derailed, kind of by the museum institutionalization and the TV institutionalization. And something that we really had that was great, that was

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 21 -

MAN (Cont.): functioning, sort of just kind of dribbled out. And I remember there was an audience that we always had to those events. And people came because they wanted to see documentary tapes. There were other people that came because they wanted to see the narrative tapes. There were people from the dance community; they wanted to see the dance tapes. You know. And so that actually helped create a community that, in fact, we're also missing and lacking, and we're wondering why. And kind of part of the reason is a kind of over-specialization, in terms of showing. In any case, there's an issue there about distribution. One of the issue of media centers is that they were modeled on the old cine clubs, film clubs. Some of the best audiences for film work were the filmmakers, their friends, and their friends that they brought in, et cetera.

LEWITAN: It's very true.

MAN: And there's something— Like, we're embarrassed about that idea. It's as if that shouldn't be. I think it makes complete sense.

LEWITAN: It's what gives energy to the creation of new work, because you're—

MAN: [inaudible]

LEWITAN: Absolutely.

MAN: It's interesting [inaudible; Lewitan: inaudible] how that happens on a human level, where people actually do cross each other's paths [inaudible] different geographies. It happens here, it happens in New York, happens, you know, lots of different places. It's interesting to wonder how it might happen in this kind of media environment, where people don't cross paths. I'm interested in that. You know, back to distribution. It's not the sole answer, but I think a really important one. It's an obvious big missing link.

SCHNEIDER: Well, I just want to mention something. At Raindance, we have a thing called Night Light TV. And now we have sixty hours of video programming by artists, documentarians and independent producers. And we're trying to distribute it. And we're running into problems with curators at museums, because if they take our package, that means they're not doing their curatorial work, because these are already curated.

HOCKING: But schools must love this.

SCHNEIDER: They do, but it's very slow to get going. But I'll leave copies of this. Sixty hours, sixty programs.

MAN: How much do the programs cost?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 22 -

SCHNEIDER: Well, that's it. We want to pay back the artists, so we charge about \$120 for a one-hour program.

GIANCOLA: Maybe a flash itemization of things that maybe we ought to be willing to talk about as failures might help. You know. I mean, I was a little startled by Gerry O'Grady, two, three years ago, when he came to one of our meetings here at the Workshop—I was startled that he came to the Workshop, but—[laughter] I was startled that he came to the meeting. And when he got to the meeting—

LYONS: He'd been here before, John.

GIANCOLA: I know. He had missed everything that happened, you know, but he came in time for his presentation. And he sat down and he did a two-hour sort of confessional that outlined what he considered to be failures, failures over a lifetime, and reflected on why he thought they failed, you know? And I was not in the mood for that kind of pessimism, but I was really struck by how true it all rang. He talked about the dreams they had of changing the—[end of DVD five of six]

GIANCOLA: [brief repeat of above] He talked about the dreams he had of changing the university, but how they learned too late that the GI Bill had flooded the universities with deans whose families had never been to college before. And there was this whole upscale

GIANCOLA (Cont.): mobility concern among the deans. Instead of innovation, they were looking for their next larger house. And he wasn't making excuses, but he was kind of facing up to plans that weren't made well enough. You know, weren't made comprehensively enough. The dreams they had for the American Film Institute; how they tried to affect its formation, before it turned into that kind of Hollywood sycophant that it is, and that kind of thing. Maybe we ought to talk about—You know, maybe not now, but reconcile—I find your statement appealing. But from my perspective, it's a little nostalgic. You know?

MAN: Why?

GIANCOLA: Because of what I said about when community eclipsed in our field, it was running a parallel to the larger society. It wasn't doing anything unnatural. When community that we—

MAN: Yeah, but that doesn't—

GIANCOLA: It wasn't doing anything—See, to my way of seeing it, it wasn't doing anything unnatural. It was sad, but it was an extension of a kind of community that many young people had had a decade before, that we managed to survive another decade with, but couldn't possibly keep it going in this society much longer than that.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 23 -

LEWITAN: But you see, that's—

MAN: But that's only—I mean, if there's some value—I guess what I'm just saying is, is the value in that model? The model goes back to the twenties and thirties, as long as cinema was around. And it has to do with, you know, dealing with audiences, it has to do with technology tools, [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: [over Man] But the model always involves eclipse of those communities, is my point.

MAN: How does it involve—

GIANCOLA: Well, look at the population of Greenwich Village, in terms of real artistic inhabitants. You know, and when Greenwich Village became a place to live in because artists used to live there. You know, look at SoHo turning from a place that artists renovated to a commercial commodity. Look at the way the economy follows the innovations, in terms of Manhattan real estate, and turns them into something much less than they were.

LEWITAN: Yeah, but the point is that in order for that to—

MAN: [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: All movements have their eclipse, it's not...

MAN: No, they just [inaudible]

LEWITAN: No, they don't!

GIANCOLA: ...it's not an unnatural thing. [inaudible voices over each other]

LEWITAN: They either go somewhere else or, in instances now, where—

GIANCOLA: Well, that's what I'm saying, they're going somewhere else.

MAN: No, I mean just physically, about real estate values going up and the environment that helped support that interaction, if that environment doesn't support it, the situation goes somewhere else. Those people then—You know, that's part of the history of these centers, too. They keep moving to where they can afford to me.

LEWITAN: And what we're—

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 24 -

GIANCOLA: It's an interesting argument, yeah.

LEWITAN: And what we're trying to do right now in the City of New York is to reposition the artist within the community and say, "No, we're not peripatetic anymore. You're not gonna move us out."

GIANCOLA: Yeah, but—

LEWITAN: "We're having a relationship to the geographical community that we're in [inaudible]"

GIANCOLA: [over Lewitan] But it really fails to take into account what kinds of decisions have made over the heads of artists about real estate in Manhattan.

LEWITAN: Well, let me tell you something, sweetheart. No decisions are made anywhere that you do not, either passively or actively participate in...

GIANCOLA: But Manhattan—

LEWITAN: ...*that's* what I discovered, right? I've mean— [laughs]

GIANCOLA: Ok. But people talk about Manhattan, and young artists very disparagingly, because Manhattan's age of young creative people moving there and struggling is eclipsing. Manhattan is not going to be that kind of place in the twenty-first century.

LEWITAN: See, I disagree with you. I think—I mean, it's gotta shift.

GIANCOLA: No, I think that battle has been lost.

LEWITAN: No, it hasn't. [inaudible voices]

GIANCOLA: Oh, no, it's *way*— the statistics are *way* over on that one.

LEWITAN: That's why Dinkins is, you know, recognizing [inaudible voices over each other]

GIANCOLA: No, no, the black mayor is not going to bring back the original Manhattan.

SCHNEIDER[?]: Unless they get rid of patronage.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 25 -

GIANCOLA: My point is that there's a larger flow too, that is not necessarily negative. In other words, Margo's view of what can still be done with housing in Manhattan for struggling people who move there, and my view, are very different. The sadness for me is that I see that Manhattan, at least for the foreseeable future, has abdicated that kind of an identity. Maybe 2050, it'll start to revive, you know?

MAN: I'm just talking, not necessarily Manhattan as [inaudible]

LEWITAN: I know.

GIANCOLA: [over Man] Manhattan was an analogy.

MAN: I'm talking about...

GIANCOLA: An analogy, not a key.

MAN: ...people coming together.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 26 -

GIANCOLA: But that's what I was talking about, people coming together in Manhattan because they know that they can live there cheaply, go to a great many things inexpensively, and grow intellectually. Manhattan—the powers that be in Manhattan have made decisions counter to being that kind of a place. Ok?

LEWITAN: Wait, but I think that the point that I was trying to make, and that I think I share with Pier, is that there has to be an understanding of the role that you play when you opt out of certain kinds of involvements. There's no such thing as you're not playing a role. You're either passive, and therefore events overcome you; or you're active, and you can, in some way, shape the events. And that can go, you know, as simply as coming together to look at work and share your responses to it, or as complexly as actually impacting on the political and economic structure of the universe in which you reside. And I think that by saying that community was an idea of the sixties and seventies, where people felt they needed to shape their environment, and now...

GIANCOLA: Share, share.

LEWITAN: ...and now they've stopped.

GIANCOLA: Share. Not shape, share.

LEWITAN: Shape. Shape. No. Shape.

GIANCOLA: Share and shape it.

LEWITAN: Shape. [laughter] Shape.

MAN: [inaudible]

LEWITAN: The entire idea of coming together and changing...

GIANCOLA: We're still shaping the environment. The thing is, the element that's gone is the coming together and sharing of the shaping. That's... [laughter] In other words, to say that the media artists are not shaping their environment is mistaken. Pass those Dan Reeves pictures around and look at that installation. And it's going to be in a portable form?

MAN: Yeah, we're deciding about the rock concert piece.

GIANCOLA: It can be collapsed and packed and shipped to fifty cities. I mean, the amount of shaping of the environment that just happened from Ohio to Giverny as a piece. I mean, we're shaping the environment, still. We're a proactive force in the

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 27 -

GIANCOLA (Cont.): environment. This coming together, the kind of sharing that used to go on, the kind of one-on-one communication that used to happen, the kind of gathering has been eclipsed somewhat, ok? You'll give me that.

MAN: Ok.

GIANCOLA: And you think it's an important element that should not die. And I agree with that. I guess I'm just saying that when it eclipsed, it wasn't an unnatural thing that was happening to it. It eclipsed as part of a reflection of the larger society. And workshops, Margo—anybody who wants to do workshops today has a better environment for conducting workshops today. I mean, if you're serious about them, you know, there is more workshop in the corporate model, for example, than there ever was in the history of humanity. Corporation people have to go to ten times as many workshops, just to be able to compete.

LEWITAN: It's not what I had in mind.

GIANCOLA: But I mean, [laughter] workshops—

MAN: That's management, right?

GIANCOLA: Workshops are not—And you ought to hear the content. Some of those workshops sound like conversations we used to have with each other in 1970. And these people talk about their feelings and—you know, they let all this stuff hang out. [laughter]

LEWITAN: Somehow I think I got mis—[laughs]

GIANCOLA: No, but I think if the Women's Interarts Center were serious about continuing its workshop tradition, nothing would stop you.

LEWITAN: You're missing the point.

GIANCOLA: You'd gather the people.

LEWITAN: No, you're missing the point, John. There are certain things that one does in order to ensure that something else will happen, while you're doing your own work. And you need support in order to engage in that, without its taking an undue price. Now, we pursued the workshops beyond any intelligent point, in terms of the resources of both our finances and our strength. And when it ultimately came down to are we here simply to provide this service, or do we also want to do our own work?, we elected to do our own work first. And all I'm saying is, that if there had been more resources, we could have done both. But I didn't feel like I had gotten the mark of the Holy Grail, that I should be

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

---

- 28 -

LEWITAN (Cont.): only in service to the next generation. And what I'm simply saying is that if that is going to happen, it would've helped for there to be additional resources, because then we could've both done our own work and provided that service.

MAN: So where are we?

LYONS: We're getting close to closure. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: Getting close to closing, anyway, if not closure.

MAN: I wanted to ask another— something. I think that the idea of the community and the general public, ok. But there is another option. And I mean, people have, a couple times, mentioned video cassettes. But I don't know of any video cassette distribution of video art. I don't know—

GIANCOLA[?]: There is.

LEWITAN: Yeah, there's—

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 29 -

MAN: I don't know why you can't come to the Visual Studies Workshop, put down three or four dollars, and take home your tapes and, you know, go and take them home. I don't know why you can't spend twenty dollars and buy yourself a copy of *Global Groove*. Because, I mean, I was thinking last night, when that was on—I've got a six-year-old son who has starting taking tap lessons, and I had to take him to his tap lesson this morning—he would *love* to be able to have that tape at home.

SCHNEIDER: You can rent that.

MAN: He would watch it— You can?

SCHNEIDER: In New York City, there are a couple places. You know what the return is to the artist on that? A half-cent.

GIANCOLA: On the dollar?

SCHNEIDER: No, on the rental of—for a dollar-ninety-nine or two-ninety-nine on the cassette, the artist gets about a half-cent back.

GIANCOLA: Through a commercial outlet.

MAN: Where do you rent it?

SCHNEIDER: Through a commercial outlet.

MAN: Why can't there be other outlets? [inaudible]

GIANCOLA: There are. If you rent it from Electronic Arts Intermix...

SCHNEIDER: You pay, what? Seventy-five dollars?

GIANCOLA: ...the artist gets 50%. [inaudible voices over each other]

LEWITAN: Here's an example of a place of need. [inaudible voices over each other]

GIANCOLA: I'll tell you, I was witness—

MAN: There's a place that subsidy could actually be meaningful. And the whole scene is jammed up, because everybody, every artist says, "I'd want some money back on what I produced. It cost me a lot of money [inaudible]."

GIANCOLA: Yeah, but the reason I'm willing—

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 30 -

MAN: But people won't rent because who's gonna, as an individual, pay a-hundred to rent a tape?

GIANCOLA: Right.

MAN: It's a joke.

GIANCOLA: The reason I'm willing to put this issue behind me, at least for next decade, right?, before I think about it again, is because I was party—maybe you were—I was party to the *endless* workshops on how to solve these problems. [laughter] And we're talking about 1978, '79, '80, '81, '82, '83, '84. Believe me, when I moved to Florida, I really took a break from those workshops. And people would sit around, Pier—and I'm serious—the factionalism was *staggering!* I mean, just the idea of reaching a consensus, agreeing, and then going to implementation stage was beyond the abilities of every representative that was in those meetings. Now, maybe they don't represent the media arts. And I'll tell you, a lot of artists weren't in those meetings.

MAN: You really got into conflict resolution between Arabs and Jews, right? [laughter]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 31 -

GIANCOLA: Right. And between the Council and its constituency. I could've gone straight to the UN after that one. And you'd sit in these groups, and nobody wanted to dare to anything undemocratic. You know. And I respected that. And everybody was very respectful of everybody's opinion. But let's not call it factionalism, let's call it healthy plurality, [laughter] was a much bigger factor of this field than its ability to derive consensus. You probably know the field that way, too, right? You wouldn't want it to be any other way. But to simply—NAMAC, which stood a very good chance, in the first two or three years, of publishing guidelines nationally—right?—based on workshops. They could've published national guidelines on all of these issues, just the way the AIVF published the \$200 minimum appearance fee, and the field agreed. I mean, I don't know how that happened, like a miracle. Everybody agreed that if it was less than two-hundred, you wouldn't go. And they agreed to that, and it worked. But having lived through that, Pier, I'm content to wait a while to try and revive solving those problems. I don't think they were solvable. And that's a fact of life. I don't think the field, within itself, had the wherewithal to make the structures that would've answered his need.

LEWITAN: If each artist had been paid a thousand dollars for the use of their tape, over the life...

GIANCOLA: You know what I mean?

LEWITAN: ...of their tape, and then you made those tapes available to the general public for a buck, you would've solved the problem.

GIANCOLA: That's what I mean about—You know, people came from other artforms. Like people from film came, and they told how they put ten on a reel, and they'd charge a hundred for the reel, independent filmmakers. Right? The video artists voted it down. Just voted it right down. It was out of the question to have ten pieces of video on a reel for a hundred dollars. It was out of the question. Ok? And these reels were to be distributed. Someone suggested that a lead reel be distributed free to every major university media library.

SCHNEIDER: A sampler.

GIANCOLA: Voted down. No samplers. No grouping our work. Ok. I'm not saying they were wrong to vote it down. I'm saying that we can call that a failure. You know, we can say we failed to have a consensus on that. And that's ok. But the reason we're not in those places is because we didn't have the wherewithal—media center, artist, everybody—to come together enough to say that was a priority. Now, tell me, what is this field saying about itself, when the thing that it can't do is that kind of thing, and the thing that it can do is art? Maybe it's ok.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 32 -

HOCKING: I think it's ok.

GIANCOLA: Yeah, it's ok. But you can't make both demands on it. In other words, it really tried. Funders joined in media center directors, with artists. They all met. I can't tell you how much has been spent on plane fuel in this field. This field has had, in spite of its poverty, it's had almost a red carpet treatment, in terms of domestic travel to meet. [laughter] We're talking about a field that isn't ten years old, and has spent tens of thousands of dollars on jet fuel domestically, just to meet. And what it got done was so unimpressive that the whole field's kind of shifted to a more individualistic... You know. So when I talk about the eclipse of certain things, I don't mean it negatively. I mean, they really tried. They didn't produce results. And I don't mean forming a cinema club. I think anybody's free to form a cinema club at any time, and it'll work in any city. But these larger issues of can we interface the struc— NAMAC came to a decision last year, on the planning committee: Let's get the woman who's the president of the National Education Association to give the keynote at our NAMAC, because it's about education and media arts. We couldn't agree on that. We got another alternative, independent, free thinker to do our keynote. You know? We couldn't—

LYONS: No, no, John, you're misstating something. [laughter] Ok? You see, it makes it—

GIANCOLA: Well, she turned it down.

LYONS: No, it makes a better story.

GIANCOLA: She turns us down.

LYONS: *She* had conflicts. Ok? And the—

GIANCOLA: Yeah, but we had no conflict with her having a conflict. There was a kind of—

LYONS: No, but you know, you...

GIANCOLA: You know, now we can [inaudible]

LYONS: ...you invite somebody, and *they* turn it down. I don't think we were confused. And we just fell to a second position.

GIANCOLA: Yeah, but the second position was offered—

LYONS: Which was probably more on target than the first.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 33 -

GIANCOLA: The second position was offered that we go to serious media critics from universities.

LYONS: Right. Let—

GIANCOLA: That's the fallback position.

LYONS: Let me collapse this universe [laughter] we're constructing, and just shift us slightly, and then try to find some way to gracefully get out of this, ok?

GIANCOLA: Well, I don't know what's wrong with it.

LYONS: No, no, no. [laughter]

GIANCOLA: I'm just telling it like it is.

LYONS: John, I'm not making value judgments. Take the analogy of poetry in this country, ok? And that in a cycle[?], the thing that supported the dissemination of poetry, right? And you track that, and you find that some commercial publishers responded as a kind of prestige issue for their press, right? They knew they were not going to make any money from it. They were mostly run at deficits. A second mechanism was the university

LYONS (Cont.): press. Right? There was independent publishing, self-publishing. Alright. Now, those were more modest mechanisms of distribution, ok? And what I sense in this conversation is [inaudible] between that megaworld of communication and just something simply function at a more humane, accessible level, ok? And we're caught in between. Because the model we have, in terms of the potentials of the medium are so enormous, right?, that we can't find, you know, humane ways to deal with it. And we seem to be caught in that trap. And if there was any transition that might be needed beyond this global extension, it might be an attitude towards small press independent publishing within the field.

HOCKING: But you have that, don't you? How about Howard Wise, what he said?

LYONS: To some degree, you do. You know? But then how do you build? Ok? Because what—

HOCKING: Part of the problem is that I think what Pier's identifying, in some ways, is a problem—and I agree with it—is that it simply costs too much to run a tape. Now, how the hell you get the cost of the tape down? And maybe in small press, you can get the cost of the book down, but you can't get the cost of the tape down as easily.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 34 -

LYONS: No, in some instances, you can't. And the pattern of university presses today, you know, the publication that's being generated in service of an intellectual community is probably three to four times that of a comparable publication that's produced commercially. Ok? And the factors are the audience is limited. And the unit costs drive it up that way. Now, you could say— And I don't know, in the sense of if we follow certain patterns, I could say, "Look, people are going out and making this attempt." Some have a little foothold. A lot of it failed. There were all kinds of aspirations about distribution. But people are buying and renting tapes at a ferocious rate today.

HOCKING: Sure, sure.

LYONS: That's one of the more dominant—

SCHNEIDER[?]: Art tapes?

LYONS: Tapes, period. Ok?

HOCKING: Yeah.

MAN: What they can get.

HOCKING[?] That's right.

MAN: Isn't there an issue? The one part— For what it's worth, in the distribution feed[?], I think one of the— what I perceive as [inaudible]—and I've had this discussion Ann[sp?]—it seems to me, for the field, is to get an audience built. An ability to access, so that you can see it. You put the prices on tapes that have traditionally been associated. Doesn't matter whether you're art— You know, it's like, Oh, the artist gets \$50. Great. It takes him two years to get \$50. There seems to be that the way the audience runs and says, "I will look at things, if you make it easier for me to afford to look at," you'd have a greater chance, just as in the magazine and the publishing model you're putting, for people to begin to see the work, or to ask the questions. "Gee, I'd like to see more. Who is this?" Get back into making— All that opens up. And there has to be— I mean, how come the artist can be subsidized to make— to get the grant— I don't mean with a Mercedes; we know it's the administrators who have the Mercedes. [laughter] But they get a grant of public and private money and so on to create the work. It's their responsibility to manage that money to do it, ok? And presumably life. Why suddenly does it flip into a Hollywood model of copyright, in the sense of: I have to give Victor[?] \$80 or a thousand dollars or a million dollars, when it seems to me— And I'm not disputing the creative— You know, this is [inaudible]. But the point is, you got one thing once; wouldn't it be better to build your life [inaudible]

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 35 -

GIANCOLA: The arguments that took place over three- our four-hour time periods were impressive. People said things such as you said. I remember one person standing up and saying—and administrator, naturally—“People don’t pay to see *Cypresses* by van Gogh.” They walk in and look at it. Why can’t we start off, at least, by increasing accessibility to build audiences? And charge maybe later? You know, and I can remember an artist standing up and saying, “Yeah, but what did the Metropolitan Museum of Art pay for *Cypresses*? You know, and there was this— [laughter; inaudible voices] I don’t want to be spurious, but I thought the arguments on both sides were impressive. I was on your side. I couldn’t get anywhere with that. I think it’s been done. I think what you’re seeing today at this symposium, you’re seeing a difference. You’re seeing the symposium is going onto videotape. I mean, I think there’s a new beginning, in the fact that people are getting ready to commend certain problems to history, rather than solve them, believing in their ultimate solvability. You know, but I think there’s a shift.

LEWITAN: Who’s commanding it to history?

GIANCOLA: We never would have run, in a workshop, we never would have run the workshop as a historical—you know, as an event contributing to history. But we have new generations of people that are asking questions about the twenty years, and finding the documentation isn’t clear enough. So they want not just to engage the audience that’s present, they want a second level purpose to go on. They want the discussion recorded, as GIANCOLA (Cont.): part of a continuing documentation, in other words. And what does the discussion do but air problems? So the problems start to become accessible to newer people. You know? And that’s a nice dynamic. Because I think that in the twenty year history of the media arts, you could list twelve definitive problems that were not addressed well. You know? And that’s ok. We couldn’t do everything. But it’s nice to have an opportunity to document what were problems, so maybe they’ll get carried forward. As some of us begin to worry about how we’re going to live after sixty-five, [laughter] other people can worry about how those problems will be solved, who have more energy and more life years left.

LYONS: No, and I could say if you want to be optimistic, John, that if we leap to...

GIANCOLA: That was a segue.

LYONS: ...another example, that we could say that it took 130 years for there to be a glimmer of those possibilities within the photographic field, and it still hasn’t been resolved yet. And here we are talking about twenty years, ok? And that may have something to do with—

HOCKING: Thirty[?]?

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

- 36 -

SCHNEIDER[?]: History collapses.

HOCKING: There's another place, just in practical terms, I just happened to think of, [inaudible], is it?

MILLER HOCKING: Facets.

HOCKING: Facets. Faucets[?] [inaudible; laughter] There's a place called Facets in Chicago. And they distribute a lot of people's tapes. And I think they distribute [inaudible]

MAN: [inaudible]

HOCKING: And they go for twenty, ten bucks, I think. And you can— you get them in the mail. You join them for \$100, and you get twelve tapes a year. And...

SCHNEIDER[?]: Yeah.

HOCKING: There's a fairly good selection. And it's growing.

SCHNEIDER[?]: [inaudible]

HOCKING: It's a growing selection.

GIANCOLA: There's another solution. Every videotape we bought for the University of Tampa archive, right?, that is made by a media artist— The number's now up to thirty-three tapes, at \$300 a pop, right? That was tough from the university. That was, like, \$11,000 for video art. That was a hard sell. But once it entered our library and got catalogued into the national library system, EAI had to own up to the fact that it was subject to inter-library loan. And the \$300 went a long way, when you consider that a woman in Tallahassee calls me up and says she's doing her dissertation on Nam June Paik, and EAI told her that University of Tampa has the biggest collection in Florida. Immediately, Paik goes through inter-library loan to Tallahassee, and she gets to sit with this stuff for hours, reviewing it, reviewing it, without paying anything. So it's one way around the system. There needed to be more of that. There needed to be— you know. I mean, she called me up and she said, "I'm doing my dissertation on Nam June Paik, but I can't get access to his tapes without paying a fortune."

HOCKING: But there is a sale there, too. I mean, it's \$300. And I think what's happening— And I don't know how fast this works, but it seems to me that what's going on there, there's probably some residuals, some monies to the artist after these rentals. And the rentals are very small. And I'm kind of interested to see how that works out.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER

Video in New York 1969-1979

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester NY, September 30, 1989

John Giancola, Margo Lewitan, Ira Schneider, Nathan Lyons,

Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking: last two of six DVDs

---

- 37 -

GIANCOLA: In the long run.

HOCKING: [inaudible]

SCHNEIDER: Is this Facets Multimedia?

HOCKING: Facets, yeah.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

[END]